VER THERE AND BACK

Lieut. JOSEPH S. SMITH

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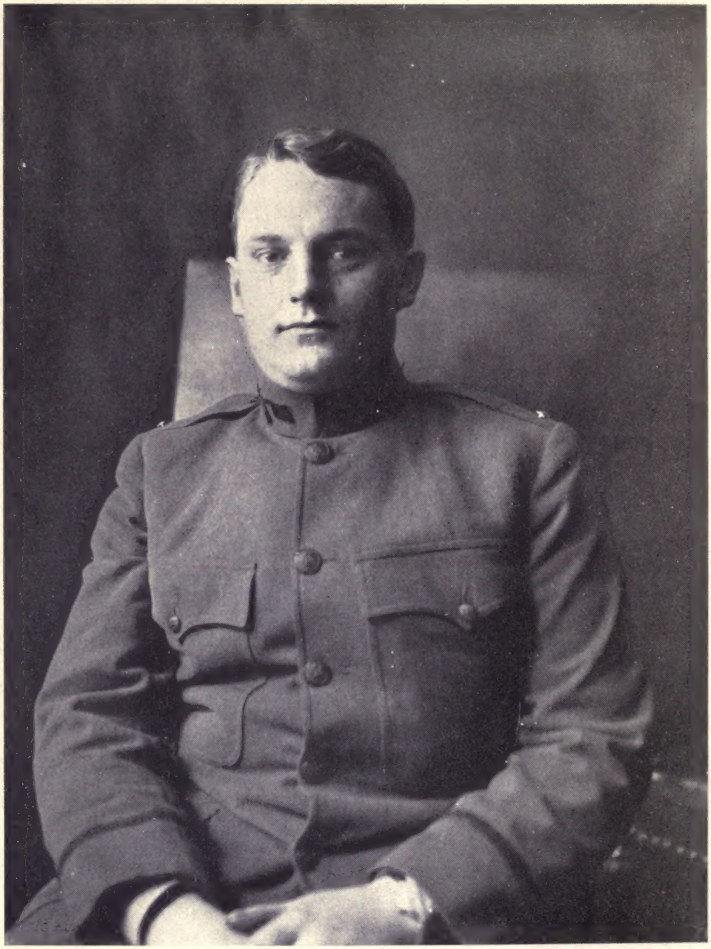

1st Lieut. Joseph S. Smith, U. S. A.

OVER THERE AND BACK

IN THREE UNIFORMS

Being the Experiences of an American Boy in the Canadian, British and American Armies at the Front and through No Man's Land

By

Lieut. Joseph S. Smith

Author of
"Trench Warfare"

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TO

THE MEMORY OF MY PAL

2nd Lieut. C. G. ROSS

KILLED IN ACTION AT MONCHY

APRIL 23, 1917

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

EDITOR'S NOTE

Lieutenant Joseph S. Smith is an American, born in Philadelphia. He enlisted in the Twenty-ninth Vancouver Battalion in Canada in 1914 and went to France with the Second Canadian division to be sent over seas. He served with the Canadians until August, 1916, when he received a commission in the British army and was attached to the Royal Scots. He was at the front with this regiment until August, 1917, when he resigned his commission to come home and put on the uniform of his own country. He is now an officer in the army of the United States.

During his three years of fighting he has been through every big battle on the British end of the Western front, including St. Eloi, the Somme, the Ancre and Arras.

INTRODUCTION

IN August, 1914, I was a cowboy on a ranch in the interior of British Columbia. How good a cowboy I would not undertake to say, because if there were any errands off the ranch the foreman seemed better able to spare me for them than any one else in the outfit.

One ambition, and one only, possessed me in those days. And it was not to own the ranch! All in the world I wanted was to accumulate money enough to carry me to San Francisco when the Panama exposition opened in the autumn. After that I didn't care. It would be time enough to worry about another job when I had seen the fair.

Ordinarily I was riding the range five days in the week. Saturdays I was sent on a thirty-five mile round trip for the mail. It was the most delightful day of them all

for me. The trail lay down the valley of the Fraser and although I had been riding it for months it still wove a spell over me that never could be broken. Slipping rapidly by as though escaping to the sea from the grasp of the hills that hemmed it in on all sides the river always fascinated me. It was new every time I reached its edge.

An early Saturday morning in August found me jogging slowly along the trail to Dog Creek. Dog Creek was our post office and trading center. This morning, however, my mind was less on the beauties of the Fraser than on the Dog Creek hotel. Every week I had my dinner there before starting in mid-afternoon on my return to the ranch, and this day had succeeded one of misunderstanding with "cookie" wherein all the boys of our outfit had come off second best. I was hungry and that dinner at the hotel was going to taste mighty good.

Out there on the range we had heard rumors of a war in Europe. We all talked

it over in the evening and decided it was another one of those fights that were always starting in the Balkans. One had just been finished a few months before and we thought it was about time another was underway so we gave the matter no particular thought. But when I got within sight of Dog Creek I knew something was up. The first thing I heard was that somebody had retreated from Mons and that the Germans were chasing them. So, the Germans were fighting anyway.

Then a big Indian came up to me as I was getting off my pony and told me England's big white chief was going to war, or had gone. He wasn't certain which, but he was going too. Would I?

I laughed at him. "What do you mean, go to war?" I asked him.

I wasn't English; I wasn't Canadian. I was from the good old U. S. A. and from all we could understand the States were neutral. So, I reasoned, I ought to be neu-

tral too, and I went in to see what there might be to eat.

There was plenty of excitement in the dining room. Under its influence I began to look at the thing in a different light. While I was an alien, I had lived in Canada. I had enjoyed her hospitality. Much of my education was acquired in a Canadian school. Canadians were among my dearest friends. Some of these very fellows, there in Dog Creek, were "going down" to enlist.

All the afternoon we argued about it. Politics, economics, diplomacy; none of them entered into the question. In fact we hadn't the faintest idea what the war was all about. Our discussion hinged solely on what we, personally, ought to do. England was at war. She had sent out a call to all the Empire for men; for help. Dog Creek heard and was going to answer that call. Even if I were an alien I had been in that district for more than a year and I owed it to Dog Creek and the district to join up with the rest.

By that time I wanted to go. I was crazy to go! It would be great to see London and maybe Paris and some of the other famous old towns—if the war lasted long enough for us to get over there. I began to bubble over with enthusiasm, just thinking about it. So I made an appointment with some of the boys for the next evening, rode back to the ranch and threw the mail and my job at the foreman.

A week later we were in Vancouver. Then things began to get plainer—to some of the fellows. We heard of broken treaties, "scraps of paper," "Kultur," the rights of nations, big and small, "freedom of the seas," and other phrases that meant less than nothing to most of us. It was enough for me, then, that the country which had given me the protection of its laws wanted to help England. I trusted the government to know what it was doing.

Before we were in town an hour we found ourselves at a recruiting office. By the simple expedient of moving my birth-

place a few hundred miles north I became a Canadian and a member of the expeditionary force—a big word with a big meaning.

Christmas came and I was in a well-trained battalion of troops with no more knowledge of the war than the retreat from Mons, the battles of the Marne and the Aisne and an occasional newspaper report of the capture of a hundred thousand troops here and a couple of hundred thousand casualties somewhere else. We knew, at that rate, it couldn't possibly last until we got to the other side, but we prayed loudly that it would.

In April we heard of the gassing of the first Canadians at Ypres. Then the casualty lists from that field arrived and hit Vancouver with a thud. Instantly a change came over the city. Before that day, war had been romance; a thing far away, about which to read and over which to wave flags. It was intangible, impersonal. It was the

THE AUTHOR IN HIS UNIFORM AS A PRIVATE IN THE CANADIAN OVERSEAS FORCE

same attitude the States exhibited in the autumn of '17. Then suddenly it became real. This chap and that chap; a neighbor boy, a fellow from the next block or the next desk. Dead! Gassed! This was war; direct, personal, where you could count the toll among your friends.

Personally, I thought that what the Germans had done was a terrible thing and I wondered what kind of people they might be that they could, without warning, deliver such a foul blow. In a prize ring the Kaiser would have lost the decision then and there. We wondered about gas and discussed it by the hour in our barracks. Some of us, bigger fools than the rest, insisted that the German nation would repudiate its army. But days went by and nothing of the kind occurred.

It was then I began to take my soldiering a little more seriously. If a nation wanted to win a war so badly that it would damn its good name for ever by using means ruled

by all humanity as beyond the bounds of civilized warfare, it must have a very big object in view. And I started—late it is true—to obtain some clue to those objects.

May found us at our port of embarkation for the voyage to England. The news of the *Lusitania* came over the wires and that evening our convoy steamed. For the first time, I believe, I fully realized I was a soldier in the greatest war of all the ages.

Between poker, "blackjack" and "crown and anchor" with the crew, we talked over the two big things that had happened in our soldier lives—gas and the *Lusitania.* And to these we later added liquid fire.

Our arguments, our logic, may have been elemental, but I insist they struck at the root. I may sum them up thus: Germany was not using the methods of fighting that could be countenanced by a civilized nation. As the nation stood behind its army in all this barbarism there must be something inherently lacking in it despite its wonderful

music, its divine poetry, its record in the sciences. It, too, must be barbarian at heart. We agreed that if it should win this war it would be very uncomfortable to belong to one of the allied nations, or even to live in the world at all, since it was certain German manners and German methods would not improve with victory. And we, as a battalion, were ready to take our places in France to back up our words with deeds.

A week or so later we landed in England. A marked change had come over the men since the day we left Halifax. Then most of us regarded the whole war, or our part in it, as more or less of a lark. On landing we were still for a lark, but something else had come into our consciousness. We were soldiers fighting for a cause—a cause clear cut and well defined—the saving of the world from a militarily mad country without a conscience.

At our camp in England we saw those boys of the first division who had stood in

their trenches in front of Ypres one bright April morning and watched with great curiosity a peculiar looking bank of fog roll toward them from the enemy's line. It rolled into their trenches and in a second those men were choking and gasping for breath. Their lungs filled with the rotten stuff and they were dying by dozens in the most terrible agony, beating off even as they died a part of the "brave" Prussian army as it came up behind those gas clouds; came up with gas masks on and bayonets dripping with the blood of men lying on the ground fighting, true, but for breath. A great army that Prussian army! And what a "glorious" victory! Truly should the Hun be proud!

So far as I am concerned, Germany did not lose the war at the Battle of the Marne, at the Aisne or at the Yser. She lost it there at Ypres, on April 22, 1915.

It is no exaggeration when I say our eagerness to work, to complete our training, to learn how to kill so we could take

our place in the line and help fight off those mad people, grew by the hour. THEY stiffened our backs and made us fighting mad. We saw what they had done to our boys from Canada; they and their gas. The effect on our battalion was the effect on the whole army and, I am quite sure, on the rest of the world. They put themselves beyond the pale. They compelled the world to look on them as mad dogs and to treat them as mad dogs.

We trained in England until August when we went to France. To all outward appearances we were still happy, carefree soldiers, all out for a good time. We were happy! We were happy we were there, and down deep there was solid satisfaction, not on account of the different-colored books that were issuing from every chancellory in Europe but from a feeling rooted in white men's hearts, backed by the knowledge of Germany's conduct, that we were there in a righteous cause.

Our second stop in our march toward

the line was a little village which had been occupied by the Boches in their mad dash toward Paris. Our billet was a farm just on the edge of the village. The housewife permitted us in her kitchen to do our cooking, at the same time selling us coffee. We stayed there two or three days and became quite friendly with her even if she did scold us for our muddy boots.

Two pretty little kiddies played around the house, got in the way, were scolded and spanked and in the next instant loved to death by Madame. Then she would parade them before a picture of a clean-cut looking Frenchman in the uniform of the army and say something about "apres la guerre."

In a little crib to one side of the room was a tiny baby, neglected by Madame except that she bathed and fed it. The neglect was so pronounced that our curiosity was aroused. The explanation came through the estaminet gossip and later from Madame herself.

A Hun captain of cavalry had stayed there a few days in August, '14, and not only had he allowed his detachment full license in the village but had abused his position in the house in the accustomed manner of his bestial class.

As Madame told us her story; how her husband had rushed off to his unit with the first call for reserves, leaving her alone with two children, and how the blond beast had come, our fists clenched and we boiled with rage.

That is German war! But it is not all.

What will be the stories that come out of what is now occupied France?

This French woman's story was new to us then but, like other things in the war, as we moved through the country it became common enough with here and there a revolting detail more horrible than anything we had heard before.

* * * * *

Now and then Germany expresses astonishment at the persistence of the British and the French. They are a funny people, the Germans. There are so many things they do not, perhaps cannot, understand. They never could understand why Americans, such as myself, who enlisted in a spirit of adventure and with not a single thought on the justice of the cause, could experience such a marked change of feeling as to regard this conflict as the most holy crusade in which a man could engage.

It is a holy crusade! Never in the history of the world was the cause of right more certainly on the side of an army than it is to-day on the side of the Allies. We who have been through the furnace of France know this.

I only say what every other American who has been fighting under an alien flag, said when our country came in: "Thank God we have done it. Some boy, Wilson, believe me!"

I

"WE'RE off!"

"Y're a blinkin' liar! We ain't moved!"

"We have! Come and see!"

So Tommy and I clattered toward the deck to find out, but alas! an irritable sergeant ordered us back.

"You want to get us torpedoed, you blamed fools," he called. "Down below with them cigarettes."

So Tommy and I knew we were at last crossing to France. We tripped as lightly as new hobnailed boots would let us down the companion stairs and into the smoking room. Well named it was! A Shanghai opium den would have looked like a daisy-covered field beside it. Squatting and squeezed into that little place were a company of men, every one smoking. All the portholes were closed and there was not a ventilator to be seen.

"Hey, fellows, we're off," Tommy shouted.

"Off our nuts," growled the company grouch. "Talk about your holes of Calcutta!"

"Ain't no motion," the company "boob" chirped.

The old tub lurched before a sea.

"God a'mighty, we're torpedoed!" someone groaned.

"Too bad you ain't," retorted the grouch.

So, good-naturedly gibing, expectant and excited, we lay there and were carried out and away across the Channel toward the Great Adventure. And the further England dropped behind the rougher our lot became.

"Thank God I didn't go in to be a sailor," came a scared voice from a corner. "Oh, oh, I'm sick! Oh, fellows, quit smoking!"

Those of us who could smoke paid no attention, and those who were not smoking were too sick to notice anything else.

Coming down to the port, we had had a long march—fourteen miles—with full equipment and a lot of nice new clothes. Now, the longer a man marches, the more everything that he is not actually wearing seems perfectly useless baggage. I am sorry to say that Tommy and I shed on that long road quite a bit of stuff that cost the government real money. Who among the inhabitants of that particular bit of country benefited by our added comfort we didn't know. Furthermore, we didn't care. But it was very necessary, now that the march was over, to replenish our kit before the next inspection, and this seemed to be the right moment.

Quietly we began to look around under the cloud of smoke for some one who was asleep or, equally good for our purpose, some one with that don't-care-if-I-die look, from which there could be no escaping. We found them—two chaps close together—and completed our kit just as our com-

pany officer called down: "Kits on, boys; we are coming into dock." And for the first time in the nine months we had known him, his voice seemed to reflect a bit of excitement.

We scrambled into our kits and up the stairs onto the deck, eager for the first glimpse of France.

It was dark, and I don't know just what we had expected to see, but I was disappointed. There, in front of us, was an ordinary shed, lit with funny looking lamps. It was just such a pier shed as you will see in New York or Seattle. It didn't look at all as France should look. To me, France was a land of romance, a land of beauty and laughter and green hills and brilliant blue skies. I was willing to make some allowances for the months of war, and still it would fit into my dreams. But that old, dreary-looking, black shed spoiled everything. To complete the disillusion the sergeant bruskly asked me if I was a

'bloomin' Thomas Cook tourist." So I hustled along until I found Tommy sliding slowly past a French soldier.

"Say!" he whispered. "Ain't that the funniest looking gink you ever saw? Look at that heluva bayonet, too."

We stopped until our sergeant should catch up with us, and gazed at the French 'Tommy." He was middle-aged—old, he seemed—and funny looking, too, as he stood there under a lamp with his rifle at the shoulder and a long thin bayonet sticking on the end. We grinned, and he grinned.

"Bon jour," said Tommy, regardless of the fact that it was half-past two in the morning.

"Hello, Tommee," was the smiling reply.

"Holy gee! Can you beat that? He knows my name," said the astonished Tommy.

"Come on, you men. Get out of this." The sergeant was back again and we could exchange no further amenities, but Tommy

always believed that French Johnny knew his name.

We caught up with our platoon just as it was being surrounded. The women of the place had turned out with baskets of apples to sell. Tommy "bon joured" again and added to the Babel in the little groups we formed while waiting to march off. The French girls chatted with us in broken English and we were astonished to see that they spoke better English than we did French.

After a bit of puffing and panting on the part of our officers we moved off, following a road by the river, a little, bow-legged Frenchman with a lantern acting as guide.

The tramp of a thousand pair of feet on block paving makes quite a row and as we marched along windows went up all down the street and all sorts of unintelligible questions were hurled at us. It made me think of the ride of Paul Revere. We started to sing, but the colonel stopped us, and it was a good thing he did, for just then we turned

a corner and saw the fellows in front gradually going into the air until we, in the rank behind, were looking at the backs of their knees. That hill is famous all through the army.

"Strike me pink!" gasped Tommy in a few minutes. But he couldn't say another word. Breathless and speechless, we struggled to the top and the camp.

It was a canvas camp, with big oil flares burning for light, and the wind swept the flames toward us. To me it seemed as though great fiery arms, symbolic of what was waiting for us not far beyond, were stretched out to welcome us. Told off to our tents, we threw aside our packs and dropped down pretty much exhausted. I had just got nicely settled when along came the sergeant with his flashlight. He was pulling off the blanket from every head. He pulled off mine.

"You're for guard. Fall in at once, light marching order!"

How that man loved me!

So it came that early morning found me marching up and down the edge of the hill. Behind me, the sun was just peeping over the horizon. Below, the town unfolded itself, the steeple of the big cathedral rising almost to the level of the camp. Just beyond was the harbor with its mosquito fleet of fishing boats and the old transports that had brought us and some other battalions safely across the Channel, already taking on their cargo of leave men, joyfully bound for Blighty. Off in the distance dozens of locomotives, long trains of tiny cars behind them, were dashing here and there in an aimless sort of way.

As the sun crept out it brought with it those energetic French women with their apples, chocolate and cigarettes, until the camp was swamped under them. Shrewd and sharp as a razor they were in a bargain and they cursed loudly and fluently in English, not understanding a word of it.

About eleven o'clock we fell in ready to march to the train and we had the pleasure of marching down that hill. As we moved along, the kiddies followed, singing "Tipperary." It was still very much the vogue then. Their quaint, broken English made us all laugh. Every time they stopped we cheered and then they would start all over again.

The thing that struck us most as we went off through the town was the amount of black that was worn. Even in those days there seemed to be scarcely a woman that did not carry about with her this badge of mourning for a man who had paid the big price for La Belle France.

We were too excited, though, to pay much attention even to this evidence of war —an excitement the townsfolk did not seem to share. That rather disgusted us. They didn't even stop on the sidewalk to look as we marched by. It wasn't because they were fed up; they were just blasé. If sing-

ing troops had not marched through one day, and hospital trains had not come in one night, then great would have been the chatter and serious would have been the speculation in the cafés and on the street corners.

When we got into the station we were halted facing our carriages. We were luckier than most of the battalions. We had passenger cars. Most of the transport consisted of the miniature freight cars. They started piling us in. We filled the compartments and then they began all over again until by comparison, sardines in a tin were loose in a swimming pool.

With grunts and groans and creakings from the locomotive we pulled out, bound "up the line." We sang. We shouted greetings to everyone we passed. We threw our iron ration biscuits to little kiddies that shouted wildly after us, "Souvenir, Canadian!" We slept, ate, talked and groused, and still the old train rumbled along. We

passed canals, tree-lined roads, villages, camps, other trains; troop trains that answered our shouts with cheers, hospital trains that brought us to silence because we were awed by the presence of men who had walked forward into the unknown beyond and had come back mutilated.

Here and there we passed a farm with an old, broken-down horse and a boy working in a field. Again there were aged, crooked-backed men or women tilling the ground with ancient hoes, lacking even an ox.

Finally we stopped. Our officers ran along the train. "All out," they shouted, and we scrambled down. The train puffed away, severing our last connection with Blighty.

Again it was "fall in," again march off. So deadly monotonous do these calls become that even the glamour of France could not take away the monotony of them. Away we went, already tired after our long journey.

"Where are we going?" flew up and down the line.

"Somewhere in France," the grouch answered. And we plodded along in silence. Darkness came, and off in the distance we could see an occasional light twinkling. It seemed to be a sardonic wink.

"Pass it back—two more kilos," came from the front.

"Pass it back—what the blinking blank is a kilo?" was the answer.

"Something that never ends," interjected the grouch.

All things must end, though, and we greeted with a very feeble cheer our company commander's order to halt and fall out on the side of the road. He passed through the gate of a farmhouse and we looked at it with interest. It was our first billet in France. We followed him through the gate in a few minutes and into the barn, the floor of which was well covered with straw. As we threw off our kits our officer in-

formed us that there would be no smoking in the barn and that no one could leave the billet.

Tommy and I, not being chosen for sentry go, promptly started out to find something to eat. Right across the road was another farmhouse and in we bounced. We thought maybe we wouldn't understand the French word for "Come in" if we knocked, so we walked right in and were greeted by the grouch with "Say, fellows, what's the French for meat?" Not knowing, we couldn't tell him, but we "bon joured" to madame and her family. They all "bon joured" to us in chorus.

Tommy, after a terrible struggle, managed to enunciate "doo pan," and I pointed to my mouth. The Madame "compreed" and produced a loaf of bread. "Beer," said Tommy, and she produced it. Then she turned loose a flood of French on Tommy. He nearly choked as it dawned on him that she supposed he spoke her lan-

guage. When she stopped, he said, "Can you beat it!" and she started again. When she stopped for want of breath we shook our heads and answered "No compree." Disgusted at our limitations she retired to her corner and family, and Tommy, the grouch and I sat across the room eating our bread and meat and drinking our beer.

Looking around the place I suffered another shock. This wasn't France! It was just the kind of room you would find in any other part of the world and, aside from the tongue, we might have found the family in Alberta or South Dakota or Oklahoma.

I can't tell you what I expected to find, but whatever it was, it wasn't there.

When we could eat no more we laid all our money on the table. Madame walked over and picked out some. We pocketed the remainder, bowed, "bon joured" and left. We got into billets again all right, but we had lost our sleeping places, so Tommy and I climbed into a farmer's wagon out-

side. A good thing we did, too. Some of Madame's pigs got into the stable with the company and we awoke to a reviellé of squealing pigs, bellowing men and voluble French women. My! what a row! Madame was very indignant for a while over the treatment her pigs had received but she soon got over it. Those pigs were destined to cause more trouble, however.

After a two days' rest we prepared to march on "up the line," and it was then one of the pigs and one of the officers elected to send us away with a grin. We had fallen in by platoons in the farmyard and had passed inspection. We were standing at ease, our officer in front of, and in the center of, his platoon. (That sounds Irish but it isn't.) Now, British army regulations prescribe that when a soldier stands at ease he shall carry his right foot twenty-seven inches to his right, with hands clasped behind his back when he has no rifle and not move or talk. Eyes must be front. Our

officer, being an officer, was doing all this in most rigid compliance with regulations. Of course, he had to be an example to the platoon.

Then, without warning, along came a pig, full of grunts and hunger. He passed down the front of our line. Not liking our looks, he right-turned and started away, and the only way he could pick out to evade us was between our officer's legs. He got his head through, but found then that twenty-seven inches was not enough for the rest of him. Before the officer had time to think, the pig gave a loud "eee," started double quick and the officer sat on the animal's back. This not only annoyed but it frightened the pig so it became a third rate imitation of a bucking broncho. In two bucks our young commander was on his nose in the dirt and the pig ran squealing away.

We laughed. We yelled. Then we were disciplined for it. But we were on the last

long leg of our nine months' trip from Vancouver to the trenches and the picture of the officer and the pig helped us mightily through that day's march and many another one. And that, you may agree, was worth the punishment.

II

WE were in France! No one could deny it, especially when we tried to buy anything in the shops. Yet, marching along the roads, rows of tall, straight poplars on either side and a wonderful blue sky overhead, it seemed hard to realize we were in the heart of grim, hideous WAR. We were too far behind the lines yet to see anything of the war as it was, but that night we heard the guns for the first time. It was a dull and far-distant booming that caught a keen ear or two in the ranks and then in a few minutes we all were hearing it. If we hadn't been in France we might have put it down as the low rumbling of thunder as we hear it in the States during a late summer's shower.

But we were in France, and we knew! And strange to relate, it made us happy. I don't think there was a man among us whose

heart didn't beat a little faster and his breath come a little quicker at the nearness of that which we had come over seas to find. So we cheered, and sang ourselves to sleep, and wakened often in the night anxious for the morning and movement.

Daylight found us on our way again and soon we ran into all the activity of behind the lines—that army that keeps the fighting army fit for the fight: horses, wagons, motor trucks, automobiles, ambulances, puffing engines with their queer little trains alongside piles of coal, piles of shells, hay, grain, ammunition, meat—everything one could think of, and all in what seemed to be a hopeless confusion.

All these things disentangled themselves regularly every day and were sent away up the line so the troops in the trenches could carry on. But as we went along we were smothered in the dust of motor trucks speeding by with every conceivable thing a great army needs and others coming back

empty for more. Always it was more, more, more! Just as though some insatiable monster was up there in front.

Sandwiched between the motor trucks were the horse transports, with the great, soft-eyed horses plodding stolidly along looking at us as we passed and wondering what it was all about. They were passed on the road by the lighter and more frisky artillery teams drawing their little guns. White with dust and driven by cocky youngsters full of pride in themselves, horses and drivers seemed to sense their superiority over the less agile transport service.

Swinging in and out through all the line went the ambulances—going "up" for those who had "copped" it during the night. All traffic gave way to them. On the "up" trip they were out to shatter all the speed laws, but on the trip "down," curtains fastened taut at the back, they were driven with a skill that would make an ex-taxi chauffeur

turn in his grave; driven with a skill born of the knowledge of the suffering caused inside by needless bumps and jolts. We sent many glances after them, for we knew that those men, hidden away from our sight, a few hours before had been where we would be in a few hours more.

We marched that day round-eyed with wonder at all the things we saw. The very magnitude of it appalled us. Dimly we began to realize what a very small part of it we were, after all. And the realization did us a great deal of good.

Late that evening we arrived at a camp about seven miles behind the line. We were fearfully tired, but we were gloriously happy. Then the next day it rained, and our spirits drooped. At five o'clock that afternoon we were ordered to fall in outsde our huts. We fell in and there, standing on an old ration box in the pouring rain was the general who at that time commanded the Canadian Expeditionary Force. With

no great coat or protection of any kind, he stood there and talked to us. There were no heroics; just a plain statement in the simplest of terms. We were to take over trenches that night, he said, and he told us what to expect and what we were to do. It made a great impression on all of us and we cheered like mad as the general left with our colonel by his side. He took with him our hearts and our allegiance as he had done with the first division.

In a few minutes the huts housed a mass of chattering, swearing, sweating humanity. Every man was trying vainly to shove into corners where there was no room, things that never should have been brought along —and we were to march off in an hour. It certainly was an active hour, but at its end we were on our way to the trenches, five rounds in the magazine of our rifles, not for target practice this time. We were going out to kill!

As I remember, I was not excited, but I

was expectant and eager to be in a first line trench and see for myself all those things we had been hearing about during our months of training.

Silently we marched through a pitch-black night. Two ruined villages loomed up in our path like ghosts in a graveyard. At last we were in a trench; a communication trench leading to the front line. We walked and walked, winding in and out, with now and then a flare shooting up from the Boches or from our lines. Sometimes they seemed right over us, but they were not, for we caught not even a trace of their glow. Then they would appear off in the distance until we had to look twice to be sure they were not shooting stars.

Sometimes we were squeezed tightly against the mud walls.

Here and there we found spaces with room for four men to pass abreast, and still we walked, and cursed, because we were dead tired. It was midnight and the rou-

tine of man's normal life said we should be in bed. We had not yet taught nature she was wrong.

With whispered injunctions to keep quiet and stoop low, which we did to the amusement of the fellows we were relieving, we arrived in the front line.

Of course my sergeant friend took me! As soon as we were in the fire trench I was told off to stand sentry. The man I was to relieve whispered what I was to do and climbed up on the firing step with me. I fixed my bayonet, released the safety catch on my rifle, and I was helping to guard the world from the mad puppies on the other side of the wire.

Here and there a gun boomed; big, little and medium sized, but none sounded near us, and I began to think it was a pretty good game. Then I looked out over the parapet. Something was moving out there! Maybe the Germans had heard us making the relief and were going to come out and

throw bombs at us. I had heard they did that to new troops and it seemed to me they could not have avoided knowing we were new 'uns.

I looked again, and I was sure there were hundreds of them. I blazed away into the center of them. I emptied the magazine and then ducked behind the parapet to reload. Visions of a V. C. for repelling an attack single handed came suddenly before me.

They were still there, but they seemed to have hesitated right in the middle of No Man's Land. That was to be their fatal mistake. I unloaded my next five rounds, rapid, and once more dropped back to throw in more cartridges.

Then such a bang! Something hit the parapet in front of me with a crack and a Boche flare went up. So did my head. I was going to empty my last five rounds into Fritz if it was the last thing I did in my life. I put two rounds by the flare of that

light into the stakes supporting our wire and then I quit. I was attracting too much unfavorable notice from the other side of the wire. When my relief came along I told him of my mistake and advised him to let the wire stakes stand as they were.

Daybreak brought us "stand to" and a full picture of the mud and glory into which we had come. Our stomachs being empty, though, with rations in our haversacks, we ate and for a few minutes, forgot.

A little sun, struggling through dirty gray Flanders clouds, cheered us a bit and we sat squat and hunched in various shapes wondering what the day would bring.

The day sentry, standing on the firing platform, slipped and slid into our midst at the bottom of the trench. We laughed, thinking he had missed his footing on the slimy platform. But even as we laughed the sound froze on our lips and the mirth in our hearts. No man dropped his rifle and fell huddled like that on his neck, just for fun. His face lay up to the sun he had

seen for the last time. In the center of his forehead was a little round hole.

We all jumped from him. I can confess it—we were frightened. It was death staring at us and we all were strangers to him. It was the first of our thousand men who came over seas to fight God's battles, to reach the end of all journeys, and it brought us to with a shock.

Since that day more than fourteen thousand have passed through the old battalion to keep it up to its strength and we who are left have seen Death in all his hideous forms. We are not calloused, we are not unmindful, but no longer are we afraid. We have discovered there are worse things in life than Death and many a one of us has had abundant cause to envy our first pal to "go west."

One of the boys, bolder than the rest, straightened the body on the floor of the trench. Another mounted sentry and a third went to report to our officer.

We had been "blooded!" A second's

curiosity, he had taken one peep over the top in daylight, and he had paid. Curiosity is paid for dearly in all that vast region known as "the front," and the first lesson of fresh troops is to curb it.

Our officer càme. Paybook and personal belongings were taken from the pockets to send to the folks at home. His ammunition, rifle and equipment went to the rear, to the dump, for someone else to use. It was war, and he was finished. We covered the face and body with a blanket and my mind flew back, across the Channel, England, the great Atlantic and Canada to the Pacific coast; a little town on the Fraser river, where a mother would soon be bowed with grief.

I had known the boy and his mother. I had eaten and slept in their home. I knew the grief that would be hers and the pride there would be in her heart, too. Her John! Her boy, that she had raised and loved, had died fighting for his country!

While it would be a bitter blow, what

more could a real mother ask than to be the mother of a real man? She had told him when she said good-bye: "You are all my heart, Johnny. If you come back, I will be proud and happy. If you don't come back, well—I will be proud."

Thus did this mother of Canada give her son to the empire.

We kept the body by us to bury when darkness should hide us from the enemy and I went on sentry with it lying just below me. The feet stuck out from under the blanket and they fascinated me. I could not keep my eyes away. I tried to think and couldn't. Twelve hours before he had been alive! A month before I had met him on leave in London. A year before he had been at home, never dreaming of war. Now he was dead! He knew what I wanted to know; what everyone, sometime, wants to know.

Two hours watching those feet made me a fatalist.

Night came, and with it the padre to

bury the first of his charges. We had sewed the body in the blanket as well as we could and we carried it about five hundred yards behind the line and dug a shallow grave. At nine o'clock a few of us who were not working quietly filed down the trench and there, with a dozen men kneeling round the grave, the flares going up and down, the rattle of the machine guns and the deep-toned roar and hiss of the big guns singing a requiem, we left him.

It was well it was dark. My eyes were wet and I knew the others' were, as our old padre read the burial service from memory in a soft, low voice, and six of us pushed the dirt back into the hole with our intrenching tools.

Moving slowly away our minds inevitably framed the question: "Who will be the next?" And for a time we wondered, and maybe worried. The days were coming soon, although we didn't know it then, when there would be plenty of casualties—hundreds

and thousands of them—but no such burial as our first had received. Hell fire was to come, blasting us with its fury, turning over ground, killing and maiming, burying and digging up again, stifling us with putrid fumes and giving us no rest. It was to make boys of twenty into men of forty in less than that number of hours, but it was to purify and sanctify them in the process. It was to make heroism a commonplace.

But we didn't know what was to come, and with the resiliency of youth, we once more were smiling and happy.

III

"BATTALION is warned for relief."

So shouts the company sergeant major, and we groan. It means we are going into the trenches for another tour of duty while the other fellows come out and rest. It also means no one can move further than a couple of hundred yards from billets until it is time for the march up and that will be within twenty-four hours.

More than that, it starts some terribly heated arguments among the men as to who will be in the firing line and who in supports. There are caustic comments concerning the political influences of some platoons that speak for the support line and they, in turn, chide the bloodthirsty tendencies of the other platoons.

There is no end to the argument until one of three things happens: a meal arrives, a parade is called, or the estaminet opens.

Then the warring factions call it off and concentrate their attention, if so be, on the meal or the estaminet. Parades? Well, they've got to be done so they are done, but not, I am afraid, with the concentration devoted to the other two.

The last night before going in every man Jack tries to spend all his cash, if by any chance there is any left after a week in billets. But if there is none in some pockets there is sure to be plenty in others, and the boys who are broke are perfectly willing to help their more affluent comrades reduce their surplus.

It is so foolish to go into the trenches with money in your pocket. In fact, it isn't done. It is such an absurd waste. A fellow might get blown up, then no one could spend it. If you're killed with a bullet, somebody else will spend it. If worst comes to the worst and the Boches grab you, they could spend it.

So take no chances. Spend it yourself

and go in with empty pockets. That is the philosophy of the front.

"Crown and Anchor" is in progress in the huts for the benefit of the draft men just out. Poor chaps! They think they can buck the bank and they chuck their coins on "the lucky old mud hook" or something equally good. The banker tries to "bust" them before the estaminet closes, while three or four of the old hands look on with disgust—and with parched throats. Needless to say both these conditions are due to pockets already swept clean. And who can blame them for being disgusted? Why can't the draft men take them to the estaminet instead of throwing their francs away on a banker's game"?

Down the road in the estaminet the fun is in full swing. The last half hour before closing time has come and money is slipping out quickly and easily, for the mild Belgian and French beers have very slight intoxicating effect. Here and there a seri-

ous-faced group may be sitting, talking in low tones, earnestly thumping with fists to emphasize some telling point. Madame glares at them. They are "na poo"; all the time talk, no drink. But madame has no suspicion that they are the great generals of the army, hidden behind private's tunics, discussing what should have been done at Neuve Chapelle or Loos, and that even now they may be planning some stupidly easy way to end the war.

But not even the serious thinkers can resist the last fifteen minutes of grace and the place becomes a roaring, pounding mass of humanity, watched by madame with a motherly smile on her face. These are her boys, her "soldats," and she likes them. They are careless in manner and full of animal spirits, but this is their last night "out" for awhile—maybe for always. And she looks on with an "I knew it" expression in her kindly, shrewd eyes as a few glasses smash to the tune of her boys' farewell.

It was a song we had picked up from no one knew where. It pleased us and we took it as our own. To privileged persons whom we esteemed—persons such as madame—it was both our salute and our good-bye, and as the military police came in to turn us out we stood on chairs and on tables and sang to madame. The song ran something like this:

Oh, we come from the East
And we come from the West,
To fight for what we love the best;
Jolly Canucks are we!

Some of us are rich,
Some of us are bums;
But no one gives a damn
For the Kaiser and all his Huns;
Jolly Canucks are we!

No one can call it poetry. Probably it is nothing at all, but we were very careful

and very particular where we sang it and to whom. When we did sing it to any person they might well consider it the highest of compliments. To madame, as long as we stayed in the district, we sang our farewell every last night before we went into the trenches.

Our song over this night, we went to our hut, which was an improvement over the estaminet only in that its capacity was limited to twenty-two men. Sleep we could, and did, however, and with no thought of the morrow.

It never failed to rain when we made a relief, and sure enough, next day it poured. It came down in sheets! But you can't postpone your relief on account of rain like you can a ball game, so we packed up; not a wardrobe trunk and handbag, but just what we could carry on our backs in a clever but fiendish device which seems to get heavier and heavier with every step as you go along. It only takes about five minutes to pack, but

when you get it all on your back you look like a Christmas tree at a Sunday-school festival.

It is a peculiar thing to pack up like this to move into the trenches. Will you come back? Will your pal? If you look around and study the faces you probably will not find a single fleeting expression to show what these men think and feel. Reinforcement men may display a keen curiosity and ask innumerable questions, but these questions are quickly shut off by the most flippant and absurd answers.

The old hand may indicate his feelings by a fervent and more or less sulphurous hope that he will get a "blighty" this "time in," but beyond that, war, to all outward appearances, is the least of any one's thoughts. At times like this, and just before an attack, you always believe—in fact you are absolutely sure—it is someone else who will "get it."

All packed up and with the midday

meal over we lay around waiting for two o'clock. It comes all too quickly and the sergeant calls through the door: "Fall in on the road, No. 1 platoon." We heave our kits into place and move out into the driving rain. We fall in on a wet, slippery cobblestone road. There is a lot of pushing and shoving as we get into place and then there is dead silence.

The roll is called, the C. O. appears from nowhere, takes the sergeant's report of "all present," gives the command "Right turn, quick march," and we start off.

What luck we are in for now no one knows or cares. Our immediate problem is wrestling with fifty pounds on the back and a wet, slippery, slimy road, and if you will believe me, it is some wrestling match! We skate more than we march, with every now and then someone going "crash!" rifle one way, body another, much to the amusement of his pals and the detriment of his own morals.

Then comes a shout from up ahead, "Keep to the right," and we ease off to the side of the road while a big motor truck lumbers by, splashing mud aplenty over all of us. Then the whole platoon breaks out in language that would put a Washington logger to shame. Another goes by filling our eyes and mouths with liquid mud, and our rage sends us into shrieks, but still another and another chug past, each driven by some self-satisfied young chauffeur whose greatest delight is to annoy us and start our flow of profanity. By his side sits his fat helper. Both have broad grins on their faces and they seem to say: "Fools, why didn't you join our branch of the service, and you'd never have to walk?"

They disappear to the rear and our cursings die away in mutterings, as we must save our breath to help us over the roads. So, silently we trudge along in the rain and the gathering gloom. For a moment we envy those men on the lorries and frankly confess

it to ourselves, yet in the next moment we are fiercely proud that we are the infantry, the foot sloggers that live in the mud and muck of the trenches.

Dirty we may be, and full of "cooties," but we are the boys who clinch the argument and we are fighting proud of our three year traditions and the hundreds of years' old traditions of the French and British infantry by whose side we man the parapets. Our American doughboys will learn that feeling too. They will recognize that other branches of the service are important, yet they will tolerate them, and that's all.

So we slither along and come to some batteries of artillery lining the road, the dugouts for their crews near by. It is dark now and as it is to be a quiet night the gunners are in their shelters, but their sentries spot us and call to their mates, "the infantry is going by." Then they all come tumbling out to wish us good luck. They are our friends, if friends we have. They know it

and we know it. They know what we go through and we love them because they give back, shell for shell and then some for interest, every one Fritz drops onto us. We depend on them, and they on us.

With much good natured bantering we slip through the early night toward ruin and desolation, and they go back to their warm, dry blankets.

Now we branch off the road and take to the fields which will provide a short cut to the communication trenches. As we go skating over this treacherous ground we come to a little patch of turnips cultivated by the French peasants with that wonderful spirit which carries them right up to the shell zone and makes them fill in a shell hole in their garden and replant it. As we cross we stoop and pick up the turnips. Not bothering to peel them, we rub off the worst of the dirt and, still eating them, we arrive at another road and the entrance to the C. T.

Here we rest, lying on the road, our uniforms absorbing more of the sticky mud. We are tired, however, so it does not matter; not even the fact that a shell may come down and scatter bodies in all directions, souls going to their Maker even before the bodies come down like huge chunks of mud. That such a possibility exists, no one doubts, but no one is worried about it.

Mud and water soon cool one and we show signs of restlessness. Up we get and in single file enter the communication trench, which gradually gets deeper until it is above our heads and we are swallowed in an inky blackness. The journey is nearly over now, except for that turning and twisting and winding in a monotonous, endless sort of maze, with the way lighted into day one minute by a flare and the next minute blackness more intense than ever.

Now a man slips and falls, the next in file tumbling on top of him. Endless conversation about the matter follows, but on

we go and gradually we come nearer to the flares and to those men who are waiting for us—those men who have been there for the last six days, answering shot for shot from the enemy, lying in their ditch full of muck and corruption, graced by the name of trench, while the artillery hourly played on and over them. For six days they have been there, suffering their casualties and standing up under punishment, while we had our rest. Now it is their turn, and we hurry on that our relief will be on time, for in six more days they will relieve us and we will want them to be on time.

Sweating and staggering under the weight of our packs we slip into our positions. With whispered bantering and "good luck, bo," they melt into the night. We are "in."

We are nicely settled in our new quarters when dawn begins to streak the eastern sky. Suddenly the whole world is alight.

"Hey, fellows, just take a look through this periscope at No Man's Land. Of all the over-rated places in the world this has got 'em beat."

That was Tommy's opinion.

"What the ——— did you expect to see," asked the grouch.

"Well, bodies hanging in the wire to start with, and there ain't a one. Then some on the ground. But just look! There ain't a thing in sight!"

We all jumped up to peep in turn and it was a terrible disillusionment. Absolute quiet reigned all over. Our trenches were situated near the top of a hill, and we could look back behind our front line. Forward we could see a hundred yards ahead to a wall of sandbags and dirt—the German parapet.

There was not a moving thing, backward or ahead, except trees and grass swaying to a North Sea wind. The air was full of strange sounds; aeroplanes on the wing, big

battle planes, the smaller and speedier scouts; the sharp crack of a rifle or the whine of its ricochet; the lazy roar of a shell that now and then came our way, increasing its roar to a scream of rage as it reached the end of its journey and exploded with a crash, throwing up dirt or man in a great shower. Not a living thing could be found on the top of the ground, though. To go on the surface meant you would be "na poo" in a second. So we sat tight in our trenches and looked at No Man's Land through a periscope.

Imagine a river running from the North Sea to Switzerland. I know rivers don't run up hill, but just imagine it anyway, twisting and turning, narrowing and widening as all rivers do. Take for the banks of your river the parapets of the opposing armies and then you have No Man's Land. As a river, narrowing, sends its waters rushing through the channel, so does the fighting increase where No Man's Land nar-

rows, until at night there is a continual flash over these parts. From afar you can pick out the narrow strips like you can pick the swift running parts of the river by the increasing roar of the waters.

Where No Man's Land widens then there, like on a river, you find peace and quiet, after a fashion, and live your life underground as best you can, happy and content that you are alive.

At night, from the rear, you can pick out the broader reaches of No Man's Land by the regular rise and fall of the flares, making no more noise than a river slipping quietly toward the sea.

That is No Man's Land and that is why Tommy was disappointed. Not that Tommy was bloodthirsty. Far from it. His imagination had led him to expect something else; bodies, enemies and friends, hung in the wire, piled high on the ground. He had looked for and expected daily, even hourly, hand-to-hand conflicts with the

Germans in which much blood would be spilled. Oh! the disappointment of it.

Tommy really was disgusted, for what he saw through his periscope was a strip of land about a hundred and twenty yards wide, exactly the same as any other strip of land a hundred and twenty yards wide, only at the other side was a wall of sand-bags and dirt three or four feet high.

"Wonder if ours looks like that," thought Tommy out loud.

"Go out and see, you ——— fool," said the grouch, which was the start of a local engagement right then and there, and I managed to get the periscope. I wanted to see a German. We had been in the trenches for nearly three months, off and on, and had suffered some casualties; not many —but none of us had seen a German yet.

No Man's Land wasn't worth looking at. It was the same old story. There was wire to start with; plenty of it. I have often wondered how many thousands of miles of

wire must have been used up to now. After our wire, more land, then German wire. Rusty, lifeless, stupid looking stuff, it has cost more in money, men, time and material, to destroy and put up than any agent of war except old Wilhelm der Grosse.

It is partly covered by the tall grass which grows around it, mercifully covering other things as well; men who have given their bodies to their king and country, laying there forgotten except by their families and the pals they soldiered with. Thank Heavens the tall grass does mercifully cover up this, and only fools try to uncover it.

We once found two shoes standing together pointing forward. Inside were the ankle and foot bones of the man who had left them there. We found them on the ground of what is now one of the famous earlier engagements of the war. They were a Frenchman's, size six, slightly torn. What a story they told to the glory of France: the wonderful spirit and patriotism

that has carried her through all her troubles. He was a little man, possibly a Parisian, small and debonnair, proud of his dainty feet, so neat, nay almost chic. And then—war, bloody, thunderous war. Gone at once was the little man's pride in his feet. Gone were his boulevard ambitions. Silently he slipped away from his beloved Paris. A silent and fervent handshake here and there, then the depot, then, the turning point.

The French advanced. The British advanced. The Germans retreated. And then he met his fate, leaving there his little feet. Where the rest of him went heaven only knows. He died, though, happy—very happy—going forward. He died as thousands of others have died, thinking they were winning the great victory. They were, but the victory still is in the future. We all go on, though, always thinking it will soon end, hardly caring to credit the German with the savagery, cunning and

deceit that time after time he has disclosed to the world. He laughs at us and carries on.

And let me say now that unless we take off our gloves to handle Mr. Boche, our whole country will be No Man's Land. And that wouldn't be nice!

Tommy and the grouch finished their argument and clamor for the periscope. Finally they get it. All day long we look for the Boche and never see him. Hiding ourselves behind the trench walls, some of us fling trench mortar bombs across the way while the others watch the air. When a black object is discovered tumbling over and over as though the very air were loath to hold it, there is a shout, "bomb right," "left" or "center," as the case may be. And everyone scuttles for cover. In a second there is a grand crash, then silence, and we come out again.

It's a good game if they don't come too fast!

A Canadian, I don't know who, one day decided he didn't like the phrase No Man's Land. It didn't sound right. It seemed to put the Boche on a level with us and that was an insult to all white men. The Canadians had always fought fair, and like real sportsmen. In short, the Canadians renamed No Man's Land "CANADA," and wherever they go they dare the Boche to step over his parapet and dispute the fact.

At night, everything is changed. Ground that was deserted by day teems with activity. Men come and go in large and small parties; behind the lines for rations, water, mail and the thousand and one things that are necessary to trench life; in front of the lines for adventure, for work, and to meet whatever the night may bring.

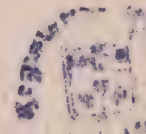
IV

IT rather got on our nerves, this going up to the line and going back again. We had about decided all we were going to see of the war was a couple of mud and sandbag walls and some rusty wire. Just now we were back in billets and were due for another trip in. We were supposed to march up the next day and everybody was grousing when the whole battalion was paraded and the sergeant major read an order.

"The following men will report to Lieutenant ———," it ran.

Then followed a list of names, quite a few altogether, and mine was among them. We were to stay out of the line this time and practice for a raid!

In five minutes we were the heroes of the battalion. Nothing was too good for us. Down at the estaminet, where we foregathered immediately, we had everything in the



house and it didn't cost us a centime. We were to be the first of our lot to meet the enemy hand to hand and the boys were determined to make it the cause of a celebration.

It was now nearly four months that we had been in Belgium. We had worked until we nearly dropped trying to beat the mud to it, and keep our trenches in shape. As fast as we built, however, just a little faster had our walls slid in on us until some of us had been nearly drowned in the stuff. We had been on working parties in No Man's Land and we were in the way of being veterans, yet never a German had we seen, except one or two dead ones lying out between the lines. We had thought once or twice we had seen some at night—huge shapes moving silently and mysteriously in front of their wire—but face to face with them we had never been, and we wanted to be! Now our chance was coming.

The younger men in the battalion looked on us with awe and admiration, the older members with envy, and we, modest heroes, strutted the street and pretended to see no one but our own band of picked braves. In the estaminet we sat in little groups whispering by ourselves when the celebration had died down for want of francs to keep it alive.

Men asked us questions, we looked superior, answered evasively and they walked away more impressed than ever. It was a great life!

Our lieutenant soon got us busy, though, working for the great night which had been set about a week later. During the first couple of days we worked in daylight getting our formations, learning what we were to do and how we were going to do it. There was one thing we were going to do, and that was get rid of a trench mortar which always pounded blazes out of our parapet. The Germans who ran that thing didn't know it,

but their time was running short, which simply goes to show how really little mortal man knows as to when his end is coming.

So we went over the ground in daylight, threading our way through lanes of wire, throwing dummy bombs, jumping into a trench, running to certain places in it to look for things we hoped to find. Among them were entrances to dugouts, machine gun emplacements, and that cursed trench mortar, which daily sent its "minnies" whining through the air. When we found these places in our imagination, we did things which, being well done, are certain to do away with just those things we intended to eliminate.

Again, we would simply walk over the ground, memorizing every little detail, for we were keen that our raid should be a success. Then we finished our work by day and turned night into day. All day we would lay in billets, sleep, eat, write letters and think of the fellows who had gone to

the line. Life was good to us. Here we were, lounging around with nothing to do until night; so we stretched, yawned, and went to sleep again.

After supper, though, we would pile out, march quietly across to a nearby field, and line up in our formation ready to move. A word whispered up and down the line, "All right, boys," and then our officer would slip away in the darkness, all of us after him, each to his task. And those tasks were many and varied. German wire had to be cut—we couldn't expect that to be done for us—a party had to look for dug-outs and prisoners; another had to search for our hated enemy, the trench mortar; another, machine guns; still another must help back our wounded; on all of us rested the responsibility of getting back our own killed, but we didn't think about that. There weren't going to be any.

Away we went, crawling through the darkness toward our objective. It was al-

most as exciting as the real thing. Of course, we reached our objective. No trouble at all. We destroyed everything in sight, brought back about a hundred prisoners, suffered no casualties, and turned into our straw just as daylight broke.

So we went on till the last night, when we tried it carrying any weapons we wanted. One fellow was a butcher. He carried a cleaver. Another was an old British Columbia logger. He had a hand ax. Another was a lather. He had a lathing hatchet. Some carried bayonets in their puttees. Others carried revolvers and everybody carried bombs. Captain Kidd's crew would have looked like a lot of nursery pirates compared to us, but as is generally the case, our bark was worse than our bite. We lacked the bloodthirsty spirit, but we were keen to make good, which helped a lot.

The last practice augured badly for Mr. Fritz. Everything went like clockwork. We must have killed a million Boches that night as we worked away at our job, and

away in the distance we could hear our artillery firing in bursts of rapid fire. It was nearly time for the game to start.

As we walked back to billets in the early morning light, we were excited. To-night would tell the tale. We never worried about ourselves. We wanted the excitement of the thing. It was for our battalion, for the Canadians, that we worried. Would we make a good job of it? Good enough to reflect credit on the rest of the troops? That is what worries the "Tommy"; his regiment. Rather would he die than disgrace that.

We tumbled into bed to sleep until noon.

"All out for dinner, fellows," and we scrambled out of our straw for a hot meal. Our lieutenant came around and told us we would fall in at three o'clock ready to move off. All soon enough the hour came and we fell in. Our officer inspected us and we moved away. Excited? Well, I should say so!

I kept wondering how it would feel to

stick a Boche. It wasn't exactly like killing another man, but I wondered if I could do it, and tried to imagine it. I couldn't, so I stopped thinking about it. One fellow expressed the feelings of us all.

"I'm glad it's going to be dark, fellows. I hate those devils, but they look like human beings, even if they ain't," he said.

With that we passed the whole thing out of our minds and sang "Never trouble trouble till trouble troubles you," to relieve our feelings. And we went blithely on our way.

At seven thirty we found ourselves in the front line trench, in my own company sector, and that very trench mortar we were going over for had blown in two of the dugouts during the afternoon.

"Get those things to-night if you get nothing else," our company commander said, and we agreed to do it. As our dugouts were blown in we had to sit in the trench and as we sat there, word was passed quietly down the line "friendly patrol out."

Our wire cutters had gone out, and our adventure was started. When they came back, if they did come back, then it would be our turn.

Wire cutting is no easy job and takes a long time. The fellows go out and crawl through lanes in our own wire and on out to the German wire. They carry wire cutters and wear special gloves. It is hard work and ticklish from the time they start at the outer edge of the German wire until they finish at the inner edge. This generally is about ten yards from the enemy parapet.

It calls for real nerve. The fellows crawl to the point at which they intend to cut through, take hold of a strand with their cutters, place a heavily-gloved hand over the whole thing, and then press down. It is an anxious second. Will it make a noise? No, not this time anyway. The cutters sink through the strand quietly and cleanly and the man pulls back one more strand out of the way. But never must he

be pleased with temporary success and make a false move. Just one slip, just one little piece of carelessness, and the whole thing is ruined.

Failure, for those men out there, means almost certain death and a swift one. They will see for the space of a second the flash of a machine gun or bomb. They will see it for just a second, then they will pass away and beyond. Those who stayed in the trenches will see in the morning a few figures lying in and around the German wire. That is failure. The raid is recalled and it is impossible to carry it out for a few days, as Fritz will flood No Man's Land at night with flare lights until it is like daytime.

If we can judge by flares to-night, however, we are not to have a failure. They only go up now and then, with their usual regularity. Mr. Boche suspects nothing, and we chuckle with delight. While we chuckle we rub our hands and faces with a mixture of charcoal and grease paint, plastering it all over our skin, much to the

amusement of everybody. It is a good protection, though. While we are rubbing it in, our brigadier comes up with part of his staff. With him also is our colonel. They both shake hands with us and wish us luck, then pass on to the company headquarters to wait till the raid is over. They are anxious, too, to see what luck we have. And all blackened up like a minstrel first part we sit snickering and chattering.

The butcher fingers his cleaver lovingly and the logger practices throwing his ax into the wall of the trench opposite as we wait for the wire cutters to come back. They have been out a little more than four hours now and it is nearly time for them to report in. While we are talking in whispers, they return, all except two or three who are left to guard the lanes they have cut, and we move off to the spot from which we will leave our parapet. The signaling station gets in touch with the artillery and we crawl out into "Canada."

Now a fellow may feel very brave when

he is in a trench, but once you get outside it is all different. As we left our parapet and dropped down in front waiting for the rest to come out and get into position it seemed to me that both those parapets rose to a tremendous height, so high that we would never be able to climb over either one of them again. A flare went up from the enemy line and I was confident they could see us. Every place of concealment seemed to vanish at the same second and nothing was left for cover but skinny little twigs here and there. And then the word was whispered, "lead on."

Some of the fellows who had been cutting the wire were preceding us as guides.

I had elected to take a rifle with me and as I dragged it along I thought of the old stories I had read as a boy of Buffalo Bill, and almost laughed out loud when I remembered one in which the old scout had shot and then scalped seventeen Indians in one fight. Luckily I caught myself just *in*

time, and concentrated all my attention to crawling. How I hated those cursed flares, though. Every now and then they would go sailing fifty or sixty feet into the air with their hissing noise and we would freeze to the ground.

We didn't dare look up to see where it was going to light. We didn't dare move, and as I lay there, my heart beating so hard it almost caused the earth to tremble, I imagined that ball of fire was going to light in the middle of my back.

I remembered the story of the little Spartan boy who had taken the fox to school and let it gnaw his breast away, and I wondered if I could lie still and let that light burn through my back without shrieking. But I decided I might just as well yell, as the Boches would smell me burning and suspect something anyway. Then the light landed—but not on me—died out with a splutter, and we crawled forward again.

A few yards nearer—it is getting mighty

exciting now. We are passing through their wire. Right ahead is their parapet, a wall of mud. Not a sign of a living being. We might as well have been alone in the world. It is fascinating sport. Just on the other side, only a few yards away, is the enemy, and he is due for an awful fright in a few seconds.

At that instant a flare shoots up, so close to us we can see the sparks from the discharge. We flatten ourselves, hoping the ground will swallow the lot. But even as the flare exploded the air became full of a roaring noise, ending with a crash in front of us. Our box barage had opened. The timing was perfect. We were in luck and Mr. Boche was out of it, for we were in that trench before he had time to wink.

The one who sent up that flare—well, he never knew what hit him. The logger mounted the parapet just where the flare had gone up.

Don't ask me what I thought as we

A Wiring Party Surprised by a Star-shell

jumped in. I don't know. The whole thing was a blaze of color, a crash of shells and German S. O. S. signals in the air, as I made for the trench mortar. My mind centered on that one thing in front of me, somewhere in that trench. I merely felt the presence of those two trench walls. Dimly, vaguely, I knew I was in the German lines, and believe me or not, a great feeling of joy surged over me. Mad excitement possessed me and all around the roar and crash of artillery added to it when, Heavens! There was a German, right at the corner of a traverse. He was helmetless and without a rifle, but worse yet, he was carrying one of their stick bombs.

It flashed into my mind, "you or he. Not you!" and I jumped for him.

Before he could pull the string on that bomb we went to the bottom of the trench together. It was rotten, but the instinct of self preservation is always uppermost in the human mind.

Before I could get up, the other fellows rushed over me, headed for the trench mortar, and then I ran after them.

Don't think I forgot that German. I never have, and I never will. A memory is one of the curses on those who indulge in war.

Then, though everything was confusion, instinctively I went where I should have gone. Instinctively all of us did what we were trained to do.

The trench mortar was destroyed efficiently, when a green light flashed up into the night. It was our signal to return, and we started back the way we had come. We passed some engineers standing at some dark shafts which went down into the ground. The stairs led into German dugouts, and just as we passed there was a muffled roar, the earth heaved for a second, then subsided again and the staircase disappeared.

We ran on until we saw our officer standing above us. He reached down his hand,

we grasped it, and he helped us out, saying as he did, "Got six of the ——— Boches. Scoot for home." And we scooted.

There another officer was waiting, jumping up and down with excitement. At the same time he was trying to take down our names as we reported in.

"Got six prisoners. Report at battalion headquarters in reserve," he told us as he continued his jumping up and down.

Away we went down the trench, happy—nervously happy, so that we spoke in an unnatural tone. We had been in hand-to-hand conflict with the enemy and had not been afraid. That was what pleased us the most. We had met our crisis and come through without flinching and with credit to ourselves, our battalion, and if you want to carry it that far, to our country. And by good, clean, fair methods of fighting.

By the time we entered headquarters normal feeling took possession of us and we swanked.

The brigadier and the colonel were there and shook hands again with each one of us. Then while we waited for the rest of our crowd to come in the men in reserve gathered tightly about us. "Did you kill anybody?" "How does it feel?" "Did you get any souvenirs?" "What were their trenches like?" and a million other questions that we couldn't answer.

Our officer came in and reported to the general "all in, sir. One casualty, Private ———. Six prisoners captured, one machine gun destroyed, enemy trench mortar emplacement gone."

"Very good work, sir. Take your men to billets. I congratulate you all," said the general.

We marched away, a weird looking lot. The sweat running off our faces had left streaks of dirty grey on them. Our hands and clothes were masses of mud. The butcher was gone, he and his cleaver. It is he who was the casualty. He had gone mad

with excitement and chased a Boche, still madder with excitement, into the edge of our barrage, just as a shell exploded. For a second their figures had been silhouetted in the flame, then blackness. Now as we trooped away from headquarters to our detail camp the line we had left was a crashing mass of shells. All our batteries were firing and the Germans were retaliating on our lines so that over it all hung a glare as of a city afire. We, however, satisfied with ourselves, turned our heads from it and our thoughts toward billets.

V

THE Bullring was not a jaunting place for matadors. Far from it. It was as bloody, though, as a Spanish arena after a matinee. It was a bit of badly mussed ground toward which our friend Fritz, across the wire, with malicious intent, discharged men, bullets, gas, grenades and bombs of all sizes and descriptions up to and including "Minnies" and "sausages." And we didn't have to wave a red flag for them either.

It also received shells of all calibres and from all ranges, not to mention the constant, undivided attention of a highly skilled lot of snipers who patiently waited until some of our people worked up a fatal curiosity for "just one second's peep over."

In return for all this we discharged rifles, machine guns and bombs forward toward

Fritz and our battered and mutilated pals backward, down the trail to Blighty.

This was the Bullring—one of the many peculiar places on that long, sinuous line that stretches the hundreds of miles from Switzerland to the sea. There it was, and there it stuck, like a huge boil on a man's neck, running out in a half circle of about two hundred yards to within twenty-five yards of the Boches, and then dropping gradually back until it reached the more respectable distance of perhaps a hundred yards from our enemy.

Here in this Bullring, in nine different groups of two men each, eighteen men sat night and day playing even a better game than poker. Truly enough was "the sky the limit." Some won, some lost. Those who won, after days of it, staggered out through the mud when relieved and made for billets behind the line, and rest. And they would think no more of the Bullring.

Those who lost; well, some went in their

sleep, never knowing; others, even when awake, went, never knowing. For the Bullring treated you well in this, that you went quick and sure. There was no uncertainty.

The Bullring was so bad, in fact, that only the sentries lived in it. Their reliefs stayed a hundred yards in the rear until time for them to go up. The reliefs were two men to a post, twelve hours on and twelve hours off. We on the post arranged between ourselves how much each fellow should do.

So, one bright night, on our next trip into the line, we found ourselves in this trench behind the Bullring, shivering with the cold, while our officer got us ready to go up and relieve the sentries on duty. We were to have the night shift, little Tommy and I. We had to take eight and nine posts, the two furtherest away, because we were short of men.

A few minutes later, leaving our packs behind us and taking only haversacks, rifles and ammunition, Tommy and I started off

THE BULL RING

to find eight and nine posts. We had never done duty here before, but we had heard of the place. There was not a man on our sector but had heard of it.

We struggled through the mud of a communication trench until it turned off to the right and left. We took the turn to the left and passed number one post. From here on we stumbled along, and blacker than black it had become. Every so often we were challenged quietly, but with an intensity that brought a quick reply from us. It was all business, this close to the enemy, and no mistake.

Once we stopped for breath and stood long enough to whisper to each other a sulphuric opinion on the appearance of the Bullring. Parapets were down, firing platforms were down; everything was down. What hadn't slid in, had been blown in, and that not long before if we could judge by the smell of powder in the air. While we were grunting our way through a particu-

larly nasty spot we rounded a corner and were challenged for the eighth time.

"Who's that?"

"Relief."

"What battalion?"

"——— battalion."

"Righto, mates. Glad to see you. Did number eight post challenge?"

"Thought you were number eight," we whispered.

"No, I'm nine. Guess eight musta died. He and his partner got a 'Minnie' in there at 'stand to.' One snuffed right out. Other guy was pretty badly hit, but thought he could stick it till relief. War's hell, ain't it? My mate's in the corner there. Hogged one o' their bombs this afternoon. Well, so long, fellows. We're comin' back for those boys before morning."

And he was gone, leaving us to—we couldn't see what, it was so dark. We waited for the enemy's flares to go up and show us. With the first light we saw the

sentry sitting in the corner, the mud reaching nearly to his shoulders. He was waiting for his pals to come and bury him, but they never did. Anyway, the back of the trench slid in on top of him a few minutes later and we saw him no more.

Another flare convinced us of the impossibility of sleep, so Tommy and I agreed to keep watch together. Owing to the scarcity of labor, we decided that the best way was to patrol both posts, firing here and there between them and thus attempt to persuade Fritz there were lots of us waiting for him.

We started for number eight to open our campaign and in going through the trench, Tommy's foot touched the body of one of the day sentries. We scratched around in the mud until we could get a good grip on his body to pull him out. It was ghastly work, and we shook until our teeth chattered, but we tugged and we pulled until we brought him to the surface. The man had been buried in the mud. We couldn't

see his face, nor where "he had got it." He was heavy, though, and we let him rest on the top of the muck until we regained our breath. But he started to sink again as though he liked the soft bed from which we had dragged him. So, toiling and puffing, we again caught hold and rolled him up, over the back of the trench, to lie there until we should have time to bury him. We looked for the other fellow, but he was under a pile of sandbags. He didn't hinder our movements and we let him be.

Our house now was as clean as we could make it, and we settled down to routine. We moved from one point to another, firing, then stood in the mud shaking with cold, whispering to each other of friends who had gone, of home, or when the war would end. That was in 1915. We said the end would come in the autumn of '16.

Everything might have been lovely in our garden, but even now when I think of it I shudder. When we searched for cigarettes,

they were there all right, but—oh! the agony of it, they were spoiled by the mud which had soaked through our clothes. The delicious, soothing consolation of a smoke was denied us. How it hurt! My watch said three o'clock. From then to morning without a smoke is terrible punishment when you are in sticky waters above your knees and your job needs your attention every minute.

Morning came at last, however, and the report went in from our O. C. "Night normal." We dropped back to our sleeping quarters, a tot of rum, breakfast, and a smoke. Then Tommy and I tumbled into our sandbag bedroom and the war knew us no more until the late afternoon. That found us rested and more conscious of the scamperings of the rats. One, nibbling at Tommy's shoe at the place where it covered his pet corn, roused him from his slumbers into a temper fearful to contemplate and that boded ill for the rat. But Tommy

didn't catch him, for we were both rolled in the same blanket. I was tossed out, however, during his struggles to murder the elusive rodent. I submit that that is not the most pleasant way to be wakened. The rat was gone and Tommy was mad. I had lost my blanket and I was mad. We said many things to each other by way of breakfast and then sat with our backs against the wall, looking out through a little hole to a gray waste of mud and dripping water. We began again, almost in one breath, but this time we told ourselves every disagreeable thought we ever had had concerning the war and everyone having the least thing to do with it.

Our speech was rudely interrupted by the sergeant, who put his head through a hole, asked us the name of our hotel, and would we mind going to the Bullring for duty. Being only privates, of course we didn't mind. At least, we said we didn't. Anyway, darkness again found us making our way up to the old post.

We arrived to find only one sentry. As usual, during the day his pal's bump of curiosity had grown larger than his bump of discretion, and he had "gone west." He had peeped over the top for "just one second." The other man had been alone with him for most of the day and was not loath to leave.

So our night began.

Things were quiet—it was a comparatively quiet part of the line. We fired an occasional shot, now from here, now from there, and then Fritz, exasperated beyond control, would send over a bomb or two. But our luck held, and by constantly traveling back and forth we managed to dodge everything.

In patrolling, though, we had to continually pass the dead sentry, and in all the blackness, that man's face stood out against the background like a searchlight. Not because it was white, and clean, for it wasn't. But we knew it was there, and we couldn't keep our eyes away. We tried to cover it

up, but each time we tried the wind would blow away the covering, and there the face stayed, shining out in the darkness until it began to sap our nerve. We argued whether we should smear it with mud and finally we agreed to, but at the last moment we hadn't the courage.

In desperation, we decided to bury him. So while Tommy ran our own little campaign I dug just behind the trench until I was tired. Then Tommy dug, and I patroled. While we were still busy with the entrenching tools our officer came along "visiting." It was in no sense a social call. He just wanted to be sure we were on the job. When we told him what we were doing, he pitched in and helped us, borrowing the entrenching tool of the one patrolling.

In a little while we got the hole about three feet deep. This was the best we could do, and we were just hoisting the dead man over the rear wall of the trench when the

Boches spotted us. Then we had to lay off for about half an hour. Our officer sat there in the trench and chatted with us while the machine guns played "Taps" over our heads for the man we were waiting to bury.

Finally we crept out again and rolled him into his hole, pushing the dirt in on him. We left him there with nothing to mark his resting place. We had nothing to mark it with.

Tommy and I were fagged out and when our officer left us with a cheery "Good night," we built up a little seat of sandbags just in the middle of the two posts and sat down to rest and chat, every now and then walking to either side and firing a shot just to let Fritz know we were there. We had been sitting quietly for a little while, talking in whispers. Flares from the enemy were sent up regularly and that told us there was no mischief brewing.

All of a sudden, Fritz turned loose with

his field batteries. The shells went whizzing over our heads, bursting just a little in our rear. We grabbed each other. The next second there were half a dozen or more splashes in the mud at number nine post.

"We're raided," flashed through both our minds. We jumped to the corner, bayonets just at the edge, and waited either for a bomb, or for a Boche to show himself. I could hear Tommy's heart beat and I know he heard mine, but that was all—not another sound! We crept around the corner. Nothing in sight. We crept to our old seat. Still nothing to be seen. Cautiously we went to number nine. The only thing in the trench was the parapet. Not liking its elevation and the weight of lead it carried, it slid down and caused the splash we heard.

The sudden firing we discovered later was due to too much noise made by our horse transport. The Boches had detected it and treated it as they do all unusual noises.

Another hour and quiet reigned again, so Tommy and I smoked and talked until dawn and relief.

During the day orders came for winter relief schedule to go into effect and we were relieved that night.

VI

GOING into the trenches is one thing. Staying there is something quite different, but coming out is by far the most exciting of all to the old foot slogger. He has got "in," done his tour, come through it all in the pink, and now it is up to him to get out and in the process keep his skin whole, if it is possible.

It is ticklish work to make a relief and calls for all a soldier's ingenuity, but one hour's glorious swim through the mud and he is safe behind the lines with six days in comfortable billets ahead of him. That hour is a tense one, however, especially in winter. During the long season of cold and snow and rain it takes all the platoon's time to keep the fire trenches in condition without bothering about communication trenches. The result is that all movements

must be made on top of the ground with every possibility of discovery.

Greatly elated over getting out before we had expected it, we threw on our equipment, looked frantically here and there for misplaced gas helmets, left in a moment of carelessness on a firing platform or in some dugout, dived into a corner for some forgotten bit of the kit or searched the muddy bottom of the trench for a tool dropped while we were cutting up the duck walk or notice boards to make a fire.

The order came down the line to move off in single file in a sort of follow the leader game. It was impossible to locate all the stuff we had brought in with us, so with some of us minus parts of equipment that old John Bull had paid good money for, we started off "on the top," speeded on our way by the chaps who had relieved us.

We moved with wings on our heels, now that the responsibility of holding that piece of line was off our shoulders. The pace in

front of us, if anything, was too slow, as panting and puffing we pulled one leg after the other through the muck and mire toward a little ridge over which we had to make our way. While crossing this ridge, which required about five minutes, we were in plain view of the enemy during daylight. At night we always chanced it and the five minutes. It would take twenty minutes following the contours of the ground and keeping out of sight. The few minutes we were chancing the ridge, though, had the twenty minutes beat silly as far as we were concerned.

We were struggling for the ridge and we had just reached the middle of the slope where we were in plain view of old Fritz when something cracked.

It was one of those inexplicable things which sometimes happen. For some reason, Fritz's suspicions were aroused. Maybe our last raid had made him nervous. Up shot Very lights and flares by the dozen.

Some of them were parachute lights, the latter hanging in the air like arc lamps, and they seemed to glory in what they exposed to those lynx-eyed machine gunners.

There was no camouflage for us. There we were in plain view, perfect targets. There was no dilly-dallying. We flopped in the mud where we stood. You might wonder why we didn't make a dash for it and cross the crest, but with twelve-inch mud and a fifty-pound pack it sounds easier than it is. The flash of rifle and machine gun fire, the flare of exploding bombs, with the occasional crash of a bursting shell made a vivid streak of light right along the line. A poet, an artist, or, beyond all, a war correspondent, might have regarded it as a majestic spectacle. To us, it was just plain, ordinary hell. You see, things were all coming our way. Nothing was going back.

We burrowed just like hogs into that mud, packs hunched over our heads with an ostrich idea that so long as our heads

were covered we were perfectly safe. We were in the mud, though, and the longer we stayed the further in we got. It oozed through to the skin and half covered us until, lying there, we could put out our tongues and lap up the porridge like a cat.

After awhile our artillery spoke up and sent over some high explosive shrapnel. This occurred, however, only after the commander who had relieved us telephoned in to battery headquarters that we had just gone out and must be stuck some place. H. E. shrapnel is anything but pleasant stuff and since not all the Boches are marble headed the racket died down as quickly as it had commenced, except for a spasmodic squirt from a machine gun occasionally.

We were able to disregard such a little thing as a nervous machine gunner and we began to work ourselves out of our holes. We found by that time we were in pretty deep—so deep it required a little coaxing to

reach the surface. We tried to push ourselves out, but it was useless exertion, because with no solids below for support, our arms sank right to the shoulders. Then some one had an inspiration and rolled out just like a horse rolls when he has been turned into the pasture. So down the line came the tip: "Roll out and lead on."

Some of the boys couldn't roll out. They had left us for a better place than billets. Their rest would be eternal, but it took friendly kicks and curses to find this out. In five cases there was no answer. In three there were groans. These three chaps our stretcher bearers looked after. The others we stripped of their equipment and divided the load between us, all excepting ten of the biggest men who volunteered to get these five boys out on the road so a horse transport could take them back for a decent burial. It required almost superhuman effort, but we managed, and an hour later found us on the old familiar cobble-stoned

road headed for billets at a pace that would astonish you. The trials, the troubles, the dangers of this last tour of duty were behind us and already they were nearly forgotten.

In another hour we were in our huts. About fourteen by twenty-four feet in size, they had a small stove in the center and a line of straw down either side; straw clean for a minute, or until we flopped on it with our muddy clothes or walked over it with our muddier boots. Candles were stuck at infrequent intervals around the walls. Some of the boys began at once to clean their clothes, scraping diligently with their knives, and all the while chattering about the "feeds" they were going to have as soon as morning came. Some already had fallen asleep.

A head appeared in the door and a voice shouted: "All out for mail!"

Have you ever watched a close world's series game? Well, if you have, you think you know all about noise and excitement,

but when "All out for mail" sounded through that door the twenty or thirty men in the hut got more excited and made more noise in proportion to numbers than any crowd the Polo Grounds ever held.

Letters and parcels from home are more precious out there a thousand fold than anywhere else on earth. The mail man was almost mobbed, then the boys stood by waiting breathlessly as he called each name. When one of them heard his name he yelled with all the abandon of a maniac.

It is almost a ceremony with some battalions, the arrival of the mail after a tour of the line. They have it brought to billets regardless of the hour in which they arrive from the trenches. It was one of our passions—we must have our mail.

When the last envelope, the last package had been handed out shouts of delight and peels of laughter rang from every hut. You read parts of your letter to the chap next to you, overcome by the sheer joy of receiv-

ing it. He reads his to you. Parcels were opened and things were unwrapped and strewn over each man's allotted bit of straw. All the while he talked to the hut at large. Since every other man in the place was engaged in the same way there was very little that was really intelligible. This fellow was expressing his approval of some delicacy which took his fancy. His neighbor snorted his disapproval of some very nice token manufactured by an energetic concern long on imagination but short on real information of what a trench warrior needs.

Everyone was as happy as a boy with a new toy—that is, everyone except a few. Some men there are bound to be with no home, no friends beyond their immediate pals out there with them. A man may have every inhuman instinct, he may be tough, and hard, with a four-ply calloused soul, but it hurts him when the mail comes in and there is none for him. It hurts terribly! But more terrible is the hurt to the man

who has family and friends and creeps back to the hut with empty hands. He knows there is no reason on earth why some one of those at home cannot write, and it stabs right to the heart. No sympathy helps. There he is, undergoing horrors such as never were known before—undergoing them for the sake of the people at home. He doesn't need appreciation, he doesn't want it. But he does want and he does need a bit of cheery gossip from the home folk; how Gertie is getting along in the shop, what "movies" Hannah has seen lately, how dad is doing at the bench, a word about the last pantomime.

Remember this when one of your boys is coming back to billets.

The turmoil from the mail died away. In its place came long and prodigious snores. Morning found the orderly corporal dashing madly from hut to hut trying to arouse his company. He did this by the simplest possible method. Every hut

was told that all the others were pinching all the breakfast. It never failed to be effective.

Breakfast over, parade for inspection was set for eleven o'clock. For that parade every spot of mud must be off boot and uniform, rifle and bayonet must be cleaned and oiled, you must be shaved and washed and every bit of equipment must be in perfect order.

At eleven, we fell in, clean, spick and span as though he had never seen a trench and our C. O. inspected us. One man had lost his gas helmet and explained that his dugout fell in and buried it. The officer couldn't remember the incident of the caved-in dugout, however, so the man's name went down on the book to buy another. A second chap explained that his entrenching tool had been carried away by a rat when he had laid it down after chopping some kindling. His name went down to buy another entrenching tool. Still

another hadn't scraped all the mud from his uniform because he had been on kitchen police, so he stayed on police for another three days. So things went until finally we were dismissed to fall in at half-past two for a bath.

Half past two found us with towels around our necks and marching off to the divisional baths, located in an old ramshackle building. We halted outside. As usual a platoon already was inside bathing, and we had to wait until they were finished. Outside the building were heaps of dirty clothes ready to go into the near-by wash. As the platoon ahead of us came out, looking almost sickly pale they were so clean, we marched into the disrobing room and stripped. Our uniforms we handed to an attendant who shoved them into a fumigator where they stayed until we came out. Our soiled laundry we carried in our hands to the door of the bathroom proper, where another attendant took it from us.

The bathroom was about forty feet square, with barrels cut in half placed all around the walls and plenty of cold wind coming in through the cracks. Each man made a dive for a tub in which were two pails of water, one hot and one cold. Here we scrubbed for five minutes or so, then getting out of the tub we went to a counter and drew clean underclothing and a towel. It was time then to return to the dressing room where we got our uniforms back smelling worse than ever. We dressed, and bath time was over for another fortnight.

"Eats" was the next big thing of the day —not government "eats," but nice, fluffy, light omelettes, cooked as only Madame knows how, with toast and coffee. We were now luxuriously bathed and fed. The only thing lacking was amusement and we got it through the Y. M. C. A., motion pictures and our own special entertainments.

Every division has its own troupe of

entertainers at the front. These men are selected for their talent. They give performances every night to the different companies. They name themselves, taking such titles as "The Whizzbangs," "The Crumps," and so on.

On top of this the British and French governments allow the men and women of the stage in London and Paris to take trips to the front at different times and before returning they manage to cover "back of the lines" all along the front. The entertainments are always delightful and they are very much appreciated by the men.

Battalions also have their own concerts, which are always amusing, but their humor is strictly local. One not living with the men would fail to catch the points in dialogues and songs which send members of the battalion into peals of laughter.

Thus time passes rapidly. "Six days out" are crowded full of concerts, football

and clean fun for the men, aided by the estaminets which sell their harmless beer. So when troops are ordered into the line again they have been refreshed with good fun in plenty, they have played hard and again are ready for hard work.

VII

THE Bullring and its neighborhood had been a hard strain on the nerves of all of us. Taken out for our rest in billets, during which some working parties were sandwiched in, we were not very keen to get back so soon for another tour of the trenches. We were grousing a bit at our luck when a battalion orderly stuck his head in the door of our hut.

"All right, you. Report at battalion headquarters." He was speaking to me.

I tumbled out and ran to headquarters as fast as I could, wondering what I had done to call down the wrath of the mighty on me. I thought of everything which was against regulations and couldn't figure how I could have been caught.

"Leave" flashed in my mind, then flashed right out again. No such luck!

Would you believe it though? That was what my summons was for. I walked into the orderly room, very meek and mild, ready to receive anything coming to me. The sergeant just glanced at me. He was busy, for the battalion was going into the trenches that evening.

"This is for you," he said, "be back on time."

And he handed me a return trip ticket to London, or as is known in the British army, a warrant. All soldiers from France, on leave, travel free any place in the British Isles.

I looked at my warrant, the sergeant, and everybody else in the place, then in a trembling voice said: "Thank you," and staggered out into the fresh air.

Leave! Ten days of it! I couldn't believe it. Then the fresh air cleared my brain. I let out a whoop that almost scared the headquarters sentries to death and started down the road as hard as I could

run toward our hut. I went through the door with a crash.

"Hurrah, fellows, leave! I've got leave! To hell with all of you!"

So I raved till the crowd downed me. We wrestled in the straw until we were out of breath, then I took messages from the fellows for those in England, took orders for things to be sent out, took on a dozen jobs which I never did. Too busy.

As the rest of the fellows packed up to go into the line, I packed up ready to go on leave, and I lost precious little time about it. A man going on leave takes everything he owns with him except his ammunition. It is necessary to leave this behind because the fellows over there are very sore on the pacifists.

One Scotty went home on leave and was in a "pub" listening to a pacifist argument. They were going to do this and that and the other thing and were generally arranging the world so that we could live without

argument. The Scotty got fed up with listening. He drew out a Mills bomb he had in his pocket which he had brought home as a souvenir, and tossed it under the pacifists' table. "Take that," he shouted. They did, and in consequence no one is allowed to carry home anything in the way of explosives. Otherwise some of the fellows would carry back 9.2 shells.

I didn't bother with souvenirs. I was my own souvenir and it didn't take me long to reach railhead. It was seven miles from our billets, but I made it in record time. I never stopped once. I wanted to get that train and get it I did. If the battalion had ever been marched at that speed I would have howled all day. So would everybody else, but it was a case of going on leave now so it didn't matter. That train would take a fearful beating. It was slow; nothing could describe the slowness of all these trains. Every three miles they stop as though to get their breath and when they

stop, half a dozen Frenchmen pile in until one compartment will be holding about twenty men instead of ten.

Now everybody loves a Frenchman. I do. I think they are a marvelous race; wonderful fighters; but have you ever been the lone Anglo-Saxon in a compartment with nineteen French "Tommies" with all windows closed and all nineteen of them smoking the vilest tobacco and chattering; —Heavens, how they can talk! A China-nan is dumb beside them.

On top of all this, have it happen on a train with no schedule and an engineer with a great ambition for overtime and if by the time you reach your journey's end you don't almost hate the word "French," then you are superhuman.

Funny, though, but I didn't mind it much. All I could see was a quick run on the train and London. So, when we arrived at ——— I pulled myself out of the human mess, shook myself, counted my arms and

legs and finding all of them with me, I made for the boat.

The boat was as badly crowded as the train, but everybody spoke English and smoked good tobacco; at least it smelled good. We chattered like fury, too, but you could understand it and everybody was happy, gloriously happy, as we pulled out for Blighty. We sat with our lifebelts on, all over the decks and in the different salons, which, being overcrowded overflowed upon the staircases so that once a man sat down, he could not move until he reached England. The boat that took us across was very fast and it was convoyed by destroyers, airships and goodness knows what not, for if a German will sink a Red Cross ship when all its markings are perfectly plain, who knows what he would do to a British leave boat?

They didn't catch us, though, so we piled off the boat at ——— and rushed for the train.

We were an excited, happy mob. Cries of "here ye are, Jerry," and "comin' ole top," flew up and down the platform. Fellows jumped out of one compartment to run to another, others ran up and down the platform just out of sheer joy of being alive. They were actually on English soil again, and had to do something to keep their feelings from running over. Everybody tried to send telegrams at once and there was much confusion. With quite a bit of difficulty we were all put aboard and we slipped away toward London.

The crowds on the street waved handkerchiefs and cheered. Back came the cry from some one of our crowd: "Are we downhearted?" And every head, sticking out of the windows, roared, "No-o-o."

The town passed, we settled down to enjoy the ride and anticipate the sight of loved ones.

I was a colonial, though. We colonials would have to go another six thousand five

hundred miles to meet loved ones, and the English know it and try to make it up to us in their open-hearted way. They can't say Presto! and produce our families, but they do the next best thing; they give us their homes for clubs, with beds, sheets, bathrobes, lounging and billiard rooms, along with their chefs to cook the food we like, and they even wait on us. Their clubs, organized years ago, which some men spend all their lives trying to pry their way into, are thrown open to us. We own them, as far as these people are concerned. They even open their private homes to us "foreigners," do these splendid people, whom the world mock as haughty, snobbish English. What they have is ours, even to their own privacy. The badge of entry, your introduction to them, both the highest and the lowest, is an American, Canadian, Australian or New Zealand uniform. That is all; the fact that you are away, far away, from home.

I knew this and while I knew I would miss my family, I didn't worry. I would have a good time and be made welcome anywhere.

Fields flash by as we travel at sixty miles an hour. Soon, almost before we know it, we are clanking over numerous switches and are running into Victoria station. Even before the train stops the fellows are piling out and rushing for the gate, while the guards frantically shout "Wait 'til she stops!" No heed is given, though. There, just ahead, are loved ones and no one can wait.

Swinging open a gate is a very neat young woman of the railway. She is a ticket collector and, more still, a woman war worker. I watch her rather than the crowd of those who have met again after a long separation.

There is no cheering, no heroics; an exclamation, "John," "Mary," a fervent embrace, a kiss, a second's look into each other's eyes, then a dash for a 'bus or a

taxi, and home. Ten days, after all, is not much, and a lot must be done in that time.

For those who must cross London to some other station for a connection, it appears a formidable task. London with its twistings and turnings, some streets running on endlessly, and to me it seems, aimlessly, others running short distances into blind alleys, landing one up against a wall, is mystifying and perplexing, but the people of London don't let the "Tommies" who pass through their great city get lost. Automobiles are there to help those who must get a quick connection or lose a day of their precious leave. These men are rapidly sorted out, piled into the cars, and rushed to their trains.

For those in no hurry, aged men, even young women, appear as guides and lead the way to a nearby club. There the men eat and rest until train time. Or, if time permits, the guide will take them to a play or show them some interesting sights.

The persons who do this are men too old for service at home or abroad and are known, if I remember right, as the Volunteer Home Defense Corps. They wear a little band on their arm with the royal coat of arms and the letters "G. R." The person who evolved the design meant it for "George Reigns," but the "Tommies" went them one better and call these men "God's rejected." Not out of disrespect, but just because they are "Tommies." They like the guards; they wouldn't know what to do without them, and the grand old fellows come out in any kind of weather to shepherd and nurse a soldier through wicked old London.

To those of us who are going to stay in London, it is simple. We pile into a taxi, say "Canadian Club, Berkeley Square," and away we go.

Everything looks great! There is life, movement which is free and without hindrance. One doesn't have to continually

hide in a trench. The relaxation and freedom are contagious. We feel so good we sing. People look around and smile. They know we are "Tommies" back from the front as everybody who comes from there is always happy. Singing, we arrive at the club, pile out, give the driver a tip that makes his eyes pop wide open, go into the club, register, and then a bath. As I register, I think of "eats." What a glorious feed that is going to be!

Our beds cost us sixteen cents a night—a bed in the West End of London. Breakfast and luncheon cost us the same. Dinner at night is twenty-five cents. It's a great club, but a bath is all we want now.

A tub and a clean change of clothing, for the club also gives you that in exchange for your dirty things, and we are ready to go to dinner, so three of us stroll out into the gathering dusk. We go down along Picadilly to a favorite spot we have known before. Buses pass us and on every one is a

woman conductor. A man conductor is as strange a sight now as was once a woman, but the girls handle the job right well.

We go to our old haunt. The men waiters are gone. The girls are even there, and the service has improved. So much for us mere men. We eat—such a meal; soup, fish, meat—but why go on? The girls carry food and still more food until they are amazed, when but once we get over our awe of white table linen, silver and glassware. Finally, breathless and uncomfortable, we lean back for a smoke, speechless but happy.

Recovering our breath in time, we pay our bill and start out for the theater; one with a revue on. We don't want dramas. We have been living in a human drama with all the play-acting cut out, a drama with life and death as the entrance and exit; something they cannot put on the stage. What we want is musical comedy; a laugh a second, with lots of music and pretty cho-

ruses, and we get it. With luck, we find good seats for the best show in town. The house is packed, the fun is fast and furious. We roar with laughter. War is forgotten. Two nights before, we were in France, waiting to go into the trenches. To-night the other fellows are "in," thinking and dreaming of the time when they will see what we are watching now. Next week, the week after, we will be back on our jobs. To-morrow morning the civilians will be on their's under the abnormal pressure of war, but at night, every one plays and puts war a little out of mind. It is not good to be too serious too long.

Theater out, we go to the street and come face to face with war again. The streets are practically dark, but the crowds, none the less, are flowing back and forth full of good-natured chaff at the inconveniences.

We go to a "lobster palace" for a little supper. Outside, the doors and windows are pitch black. The only indication of

business as usual is the liveried attendant who swings open the door, letting us into a blaze of light, the smell of good cigarettes and the sight of beautiful women. It is something our eyes are hungry for. It is what we dreamed about while we were standing up to our hips in mud, and now we are realizing it while we may. We take the full enjoyment while we can and "ish ka bibble." We eat everything that is good to the taste and bad for the stomach, but what care we? It is leave, grand and glorious!

When we finish eating, we make our exit in a lordly manner, hailing a taxi which drives us to our club, where we go to bed. What a wonderful feeling—beds, and no "stand to" in the morning! Up any time we like! War has its compensations, after all.

The next day we are out early, and climb on a 'bus for a ride. We don't know where the thing is going and don't care. The girl comes up, collects our fares, punches a re-

ceipt, all very businesslike; smiles as any good-natured person would do, and goes down stairs.

They are wonders, these women. They are every place. Our 'bus passed a stunning team of horses drawing a big van through Fleet street. Perched up in the air on a level with our eyes was a young girl, the reins in her hands. By her side was her assistant, both dressed in serviceable uniforms, with caps perched cockily on the sides of their heads and strong boots, lacing to well above the ankles. The teamsteress had one foot resting lightly on the brake and there they were, sailing along as merrily as could be.

You can't help but admire the women of the British Isles, and it will keep our girls jumping to keep up with them.

Some time afterward I saw a girl in Edinburgh driving one of the old-fashioned street cars that have the hand brakes, and Edinburgh is no level plain.

Others unload freight cars; they farm; they are carpenters, and they drive ambulances and taxis. They are in France. They are like the Y. M. C. A. and I am sure that like the Y. M. C. A., when "Tommy" gets to that world-famed spot where the fires are always burning, she will be standing outside helping the Y. M. C. A. make ice-cold lemonade for the poor fellows as they arrive.

The munition factories employ them by the hundreds of thousands, and by a good many score have they given their lives for their country as the result of accidental explosions in these places. They are glorious women! My hat, everybody's hat, is off to them. The only tragic thing about it is that we men are finding out how really useless we are.

Our days are crowded with excitement and sight seeing; 'bus rides, taxi rides, dinners, theaters, and peaceful sleep. A great and glorious existence!

Coming out of the theater one night the quiet of the city was gone. The air was full of rapid pops. A raid was on. The sky was full of searchlights, crossing and re-crossing one another, traveling with great sweeps like giant fingers seeking to point out to the anti-air craft guns where the raider was hiding. The air was full of little red flashes as the shells burst. The tops of the buildings where the guns were, seemed to spit little flames like sparks coming out of a chimney. The people in the street were curious and stood out in the open looking up until constables chased them in. Some caught taxis, telling the driver to go where the bombs were dropping.

We hailed a taxi, and even as we started to tell the driver where to go, there was a distant boom. "Go to where those noises are," we told him as we climbed in and were off. As we drove along there were five or six more dull roars, although a little

louder than the first. As we heard them the driver speeded his machine and we tore along at a dizzy rate through the dark streets, the only light coming from the searchlights as they swung across the sky. Our speed was slackened by people, all streaming along in the same direction. They were full of morbid curiosity and as we worked our way along, the stream became thicker.

It is a peculiar thing, human nature; it will send people miles to see some one else suffering.

A special constable halted our cab. We could go no further. We paid cabby, and as all vehicles were needed to carry wounded he stayed to take on his other cargo—to hospital; moaning women, suffering from the shock of a loss; lacerated children, crying, wondering and not understanding what had happened to them.

That was the toll of the night's raid, that and demolished houses. Also a big hole,

blown in the middle of a street and all the windows in the neighborhood shattered by the concussion, to say nothing of the people's nerves.

A few homes demolished beyond repair, a few families gone in one second from a fair amount of prosperity to absolute poverty, left in the middle of the night with everything they owned in the world on their backs—that is a raid. But not for long are hey wanting for clothing. More fortunate neighbors take them in. But what human hand can return a baby or little child, put to bed at nine o'clock by a mother who sees the same baby at midnight disappear in a mass of brick dust and the smoke of an exploding bomb? We see the grief of that mother as she is led away, saved by some mysterious freak of fortune. Then our hearts are filled with bitter rage and steeled for the things that must come on the battlefield.

But then, when the time comes and the

Huns shout "Kamerad" we, being Anglo-Saxon, send them behind our lines to live happy and content until war is finished, when we shall send them home to their families.

We had to walk back to the club. Our taxi was doing better work than carrying us and as we walked, we talked of what we had seen.

"You can say what you like, fellows," says one, "but any man who does the thing those airmen have just done is just as responsible as the government which orders him to do it. The people know of the things the Kaiser and his crew do. They are intelligent; at least they used to advertise that they were. Well then, if they stand for the stuff their men pull off, they are no better than their government, and I for one, won't recognize them as any better."

We all agreed, for there is no argument. Finding we were lost, we sat on a door step until daylight, so we could see where we

were. We sat there talking and smoking. I shan't tell you what we said; you'd say we were all crazy. That's because you don't know yet; it is only the same old story, anyway—Germany and her rottenness, of which she had always given us proof. The proof came this time not on the battlefield, where war is supposed to be fought, however, but in a city; a city full of men, women and children. Still, what's the use talking? Fighting is the thing.

Daylight found us looking for a 'bus or taxi, and putting the night behind us to be kept in our memory for future use in the field.

Of that day I shall say little. It was our last day of leave. It sped fast, and so did we. And the next morning found us on our way back to Victoria station and the trenches.

What a place is that station! What stories its old walls could tell of the farewells there daily, in the breaking dawn; of

the last longing looks as loved ones part, slowly and lingeringly. Part they must and do, however, bravely, silently.

Early morning, 'buses and taxis start discharging their loads; mothers, wives, sisters, sweethearts, children, all clinging to their beloved. Bravely they walk across the pavement and under the portals, blackened by long years of engine smoke so that now they look more sinister and forbidding than ever.

Bravely the fellows walk toward the iron fencing that will separate them from their families until—who knows when? They reach the gates and stop for that last second, for civilians may go no farther. A hug, a kiss, and the man passes through the gates —gone. He walks backward for a second, then is lost in the khaki crowd. The family is left behind to wait, and it resolutely turns about and walks away. There is no cheering; just a wave of the hand as if he were going to the seashore for awhile. Heroics

are not indulged in. As they say, "It's not done in the best families," and everybody, he or she, East Ender or West Ender, belongs to the best families if he has boys "over there."

That is what we saw, we colonials, as we came down to go back too. And I will confess it hurt a bit—with no one to say goodbye to us.

But we climbed aboard and away we went, out of Blighty and over again. "Now for what's to come and never heed."

VIII

THE trip back from Blighty is much like the trip over, except that the boys are all clean and that the chatter is about what has been, rather than what will be. Every one is full of the days of leisure; of rest and sleep and the best shows and the "newest bit o' skirt." Enough experience, enough pleasure have been accumulated in ten days to spread through all the coming months until that next, indefinite, but already anticipated leave.

We were probably two thousand who tumbled down the gangplank and were rounded up by the officers in command of the port to be put on the trains bound toward the front. Some were draft men, never out before, going to bring up to strength some of the old battalions. Many were back from hospital to once more tempt fate and pray for a "cushy one." There

were half a dozen "delinquents"; men who had overstayed their leave and were being escorted back to their companies to make their excuses and stand for field punishment. Most of us, however, were there just in time to get under the leave limit.

Ten days I had been gone. Our battalion had been in the line and now was out. By the time I reached detail camp I knew it would be nearly time for another tour in. I left railhead and caught the tail end of a transport wagon for a lift to billets. I knew immediately something was in the air. The driver had heard rumors of an attack. It might be ordered any hour.

"Hell of a time for you to be gettin' back," he said. "Couldn't yer have missed the boat?"

We talked of the prospect of a "push." We argued strategy and tactics and the possibility of breaking through. I left him near the village and ran down the road to where I expected my platoon to be billeted. I saw Tommy seated on a broken gate and

almost threw my arms around him I was so glad to be back "home."

"Fine time for you to be gettin' back," he said, but he almost shook my hand off. "Why couldn't one of them gendarmes up in London run ye in for a few days?"

Then he told me. The transport man was right. An attack was ordered and this was Zero Day. The day of all days had come.

For the officers Zero Day is a day of preparation from dawn to dark. They must check over and issue to the men all they will need in the coming attack. They must be sure that the ammunition is distributed, that rifles and bayonets, bombs and entrenching tools are in order, that first aid packs are complete and water bottles and ration bags are filled. The detail to be watched reaches to every man in the battalion, for one partly equipped man, in the emergency, might mean the death of an entire platoon.

For the men, too, it is a day of work.

Billets must be cleaned. Last attention must be given to equipment. There are letters to write, packets of keepsakes to be made up in case anything happens, and there is as much rest as possible to be obtained because, once out of billets, rest hours are over for an indefinite period.

As each company is ready it goes down the road to lie and wait for the rest of the battalion. The colonel is there at the appointed meeting place as we come along. We halt, and he walks toward us—one of the old "contemptibles." Our company commander calls us to attention, salutes, and the colonel returns it. And then, instead of a long harangue, he says simply, "I will meet you at our objective. Please be there on time." That's all. But he meant a great deal more for he knew, and we knew, we wouldn't all get there. Our objective, perhaps, would be the third enemy line. But why prattle about it?

To each company as it came up he went

in the same quiet, confident manner, giving his message to them. His few words did more to put confidence in the men than a long line of "'ot air," as the company grouch always called the long speeches that are sometimes inflicted on us.

"Tommy" Atkins knows he is a better man than the Boche and he doesn't need to be told it. Furthermore, he doesn't believe in world-wide advertising of the fact. He knows it and so does Fritz, and they are the two most interested parties.

The adjutant reports to the colonel "battalion present and correct," and we move off. In the distance, ahead of us, preparing the way for us as we march, we hear the steady pounding of the guns. Any one looking for signs of emotion would be disappointed. If a man feels anything—nervousness, hesitation—and everyone almost invariably does, there is no visible evidence.

A man who goes to a new job or receives a promotion in his civilian office goes to

work with a certain amount of trepidation and anxiety. The first day everything is strange and the responsibilities are new. Will he make good? That is the question that is constantly in the back of his head and it may, for the time, spoil the joy of his being there. After a short while, he makes good, and everything runs smoothly. He may enter his office or shop in the morning all out of sorts with the monotony of the thing, but this feeling will be banished in a little while by the pleasure of seeing his work well done. At times he may take a few minutes to let his thoughts run riot. The unpleasant ones he glides over but the pleasant ones he holds fast to, lingering with them.

The mind of that man is the mind of the soldiers as they march away. They have a job to do. The attack and Zero Day are just a part of the job. Sometimes they, like the civilian, get "fed up" and growl, but they go on just the same. The civilian

keeps on because to live he must eat and have certain comforts which he cannot obtain in any other way. "Tommy" keeps on because he wants, he and his, to have the right to live as they see fit in a safe and sane way. If war is the way it has to be obtained, then he will obtain it that way. So he welcomes rather than dreads an attack, since it brings him just that much nearer to his goal.

Clad in fighting kit we swing along out of the village to the tune of "Everybody's Doing It" from the band. All the old French people come to wave us "good-bye." One old woman inquires of Tommy, "Poosh?" and he replies in excellent French, "Oui, Madame, Allemand Rhine toot sweet," which pleases her greatly. She hobbles off to tell the rest that the German swine will be shoved over the Rhine immediately, and the whole village cheers with feeble, quavering voices. We answer with a roar which leaves them all in such great

good humor that they go back and feed the chickens a little extra grain and the pigs an extra turnip. The chickens cackle louder, the pigs grunt with pleasure, the old people talk about Allemand and the Rhine, and we go on our way singing. So everybody is happy.

Our billet was seven or eight miles back of the lines and away from the main highways of war. As we march along, it may as well have been England, or the States, or Canada. Soon, however, we pass an occasional idling transport wagon, two sleepy beasts and a sleepier driver, who wishes us luck. He knows where we are going. Fighting kit is worn for only one purpose.

Now we pass a "tank camp," but most of the monsters are gone. Already they are in their positions waiting for us. They won't have much longer to wait.

We halt for rest near an old artillery stable. There are only one or two old horses there now—old crocks—with three

or four men. The rest have gone forward to the line, waiting for us, too. When we have done our work they will bring their guns still further forward.

As we move along, the rumble of the guns increases. Soon we enter another village, full of other "Tommies" and the various men who work behind the lines. The band starts again, heads are up, every man throws out his chest and with a smile we swing through the village, every one in step. It is plain "swank," but right well we do it. Other infantry wish us well, we shout "good luck," and we pass out into the main road to battle.

From now on there are wagons and more wagons, trucks and more trucks, all headed the one way. Ammunition limbers by the score go by, for the guns are fairly eating up their food. They are driven by cocky youngsters. Though they are barely able to sit in their saddles from lack of sleep, they go on, and on, for we can do nothing

without them. We know it and they know it. So they go on, if necessary, until horses and men drop with exhaustion.

Staff cars go swirling by, skipping in and out between the slower and more cumbersome vehicles, the officers inside serious faced and frowning as though the whole thing rested on their shoulders.

"All this fuss over us," said Tommy. "Can you beat it?"

"Better funeral than you'd get in civil life," answers the grouch, which merely goes to show how pessimistic and disagreeable some people can be.

Out of all this confusion our colonel leads us into a quiet field to halt for a lunch and rest. The jam on the road continues, though. There could be no halt there. It is like a play with all those people as "supers," rushing on and off, making ready for the grand entrance on that battle stage of the leading characters—the infantry—us! And we sit in "the wings" eating our

bite and criticising the "supers," as I believe all great actors do sometimes.

As soon as we finish eating most of us sleep, for who knows when we will have another chance? Some do not sleep but lay and talk of what is to come and the chances of getting through to the objective. Bets are made on whether the enemy wire will be down or whether we will get held up by machine gun fire; that the tanks will or will not get stuck, but never a word as to whether any of us will come back. Everybody feels it; everybody fully appreciates the possibilities, but nobody speaks of it. I think you will find that troops moving up to attack are worried more by the knowledge of the sorrow their death would cause at home than by the thought of death itself.

Our officers are sitting round in a circle talking among themselves. So we place odds on them, too; coming back, to win; wounded, for place; and knocked out, for show.

Don't think "Tommy" is a hardened, calloused sort of chap. He isn't. He is just an Anglo-Saxon and a sportsman. It is the same instinct that makes him put up always a good square fight, so entirely different from the habits of Fritz.

"Fall in" comes over the field. We put on our equipment, not to take it off again until we come out. We dive into the maze of traffic moving forward and move with it. We are getting well toward the front now and meet or pass other troops, also in fighting kit and bent on the same errand. We cheer them and they cheer us.

How nice and green the grass looks! How blue the sky! Every little bit of the landscape seems to stand out in brilliant hues impressing us more than ever with the real beauty of the world. The village ahead that we are coming to, how peaceful it looks, but even as we look it belches forth flame and smoke and more 9.2 shells go hurtling to the enemy lines.

"Hope them things hit the blinkin' Kaiser," growls Tommy.

"Most sensible thing you ever said," answers the grouch, and every one shouts "'Ear, 'ear, matey."

On our left is a big, square compound enclosed with barbed wire to a height of about eight feet and topped by sentry boxes. It is the prisoners' cage. At the same time to-morrow, it will be full of Boches. As we pass it we enter the shell zone. We know, because the prisoner cages are always just on the edge of the enemy's extreme range. From now on, we are "in it," and before we know it we are at the center of what seemed such a peaceful little village.

Now it fairly teems with activity. Troops are everywhere; trench mortar batteries, machine gun companies, engineers, field dressing stations, pioneers and artillerymen; horses and trucks—big and little—automobiles and wagons—water wagons, feed wagons, every kind of wagon—piles of

ammunition in all shapes and sizes, timbers, barbed wire drums and wire stakes. Over it all the big howitzers fire continually with a crash that is almost stunning, and through it all we march on, out and beyond, leaving it all behind, for these things in the village cannot move until after dark.

One thing we don't leave behind. Instead, the further we go the thicker the guns, until their flash and bang are almost continuous. There is no wind, yet the air is full of strange, weird sounds—shells coming and going.

We come to the last village we will pass through—at least it once was a village. Now you could not tell the mayor's house from the poorest laborer's, except, perhaps, from the size of the pile of bricks.

Near convenient holes loiter a few soldiers, ready to dive into shelter the minute an unfriendly shell comes racing along in search of them. From some of the cellars comes the sharp, vicious crack of the long,

lean 4.7s. Now and then, as our fire seems to slacken a bit, we hear the whine of a Boche shell overhead, going well back. They are firing on chance, for none of their 'planes are in the air and none of their sausage balloons. We have taken control of the air and not an enemy can live in it.

Marching in half platoons we leave the village and come out into the open field. About half a mile in front of us we can see the entrance to our communication trench winding up the side of a gradually sloping hill, until it reaches the crest where our front line rests. In the morning, with the first streak of dawn, we will go down the other side of that hill to meet the enemy.

All over the flat land and the hill are little humps, reminding me of the ant heaps at home. These little humps hide a worse sting than any ant, though. They are gun emplacements. We see little tongues of flame flash out with potential death for twenty men in every tongue.

As a guide to the shortest way across we have the signs put up by the medical men. "Walking Wounded" they say, and a black hand with a forefinger outstretched points the way to where a dressing station will be found. The hand points back now for us, but it serves our purpose every bit as well.

How many of us will be looking for those signs to-morrow? We wonder, and plod along.

The air by this time smells strongly of powder, for the Germans are not taking their punishment quietly. We are fortunate, though, and get into the C. T. with no damage done. We enter the trench single file just as it gets dusk and we stumble along in silence.

It has been a long day and we have not yet started on our real job. We are anxious to get to our assembly trenches so we can rest. So we grope our way through what seems leagues of trenches until finally we turn off to our right and halt. Our officer

comes down the line, squeezing by with difficulty, for it is a very narrow trench.

"Sit down, fellows; rest as well as possible. Smoke if you like, but be very careful of lights. We are in our assembly position. I'm going now to see if I can make arrangements to get us all something warm to drink."

Those were his instructions as he left us. He never returned. A shell got him while he was looking for a dugout into which we could go by turns and cook something hot before we went over. Word came to us of this, but before we had time to give more than a second thought to his loss our sergeant, on orders, began to move us into our final position in No Man's Land. There we lay until day should break so that we could move into enemy territory and fill up our prisoners' cage.

You may wonder what a man thinks, out in the mud and within yards of the enemy with no protection but the sky. So

far as I can tell, there are no thoughts. On that night, every man snatched what sleep he could. If there were those whose sleep was fitful, their thoughts, I wager, were too confused for understanding. To these latter dawn came with the air full of a strange, rushing, whiny sort of roar beggaring description, to end in a bursting crash and a wall of flame in front of their very eyes. The sleepers woke in the din, saw that wall of flame and mechanically reached for their bayonets to fix them on their rifles.

The time had come. Our barrage was down. We had passed from Zero Day to Zero Hour,

IX

TOMMY and I had been asleep about sixty yards from the Boche line, not because we were especially brave or underrated the cornered German, but we were tired—oh, so tired! So we had slept.

Wakened by the crash and din of Zero Hour we leaped to our feet, reached for our bayonets, and clicked them on our rifles.

Tommy pulled me to him and shouted: "Like a house afire, ain't it? God!" And as he drew away to find his place in the line, he shuddered. So did I. It was appalling, wonderful, magnificent, awesome! What is the use? No words will ever describe that living wall of flame as it split the earth in front of us. It was Zero Hour!

Even as we stood and watched, the smoke seemed to settle lower and lower over the earth so we could but dimly see the German S. O. S. signals as they went flying

into the air in frantic haste. One of the fellows laughed, a crazy sort of laugh, and pointed to them. "Look at 'em. Look at 'em. The ——— ——— know what's comin'."

As we looked at their S. O. S.'s the whole wall seemed to step forward as though possessed of seven league boots. It was our turn now. That was our signal to occupy the German front line. We were the first wave, so we occupied it. There was no fighting. There was no one to fight, but the enemy was far from being through.

Their shells and machine guns were working overtime, but not on us. They were firing on our reserves and the tragedy was occurring behind us, but we knew nothing of it. You would be astonished at the little a man knows of what is happening on either side of him, in front or behind. Men may be knocked out six feet away to the right or left, but it is ten to one you never see it.

The front line was no line at all. Our artillery had changed it from a ditch to a canal, so we crept to its far edge and waited —waited for our barrage to move on so we could get into their second line. We were choked with the fumes of the powder, and the flames from the exploding shells seemed to scorch us. The fellow next to me took off his helmet to wipe the perspiration from his forehead. German H. E. shrapnel cracked overhead; the man's helmet dropped from a nerveless hand and he seemed to let his head fall forward as though exhausted. He was "out!"

Tommy crawled to my side, and shouted in my ear. "Damn fool!" and he pointed to the fellow.

I resolved to keep my helmet on my head.

There were no tangible thoughts in my mind at the time. I could never get over that wall of exploding fire. It fascinated and repelled. It was like the hypnotizing power of a snake and as I watched, speech-

less, it took that step forward again. That was the thing that made me marvel; not there, perhaps, but after; that wonderful, scientific accuracy which would take a wall of crashing shells and even as you looked, pick it bodily from blank yards in front of you and move it forward blank yards more without losing so much as one flash.

As the barrage lifted we moved up with it. We were not a wildly cheering mass of bloodthirsty soldiers, but a silent, cool, calculating lot, evenly spaced apart, rifle at the port. We walked toward the enemy!

It is easy to say walk, but it was hardly that. It is rather jerky progress over ground that has been churned again and again, burying, throwing out and burying again some of the terrible secrets it holds, until places that are not shell holes are great masses of spongy, soft, muggy earth which tries to suck you down and strangle you as you pass over. But up and down, up and down we go, always just behind our barrage.

As we went forward into their second line, I missed Tommy. His cheery little face was gone. I couldn't stop to look for him; that was absolutely against orders. So on I went, thinking about him, and getting madder and madder every second. He had been knocked out, I supposed, as it was the only thing that would take him very far away from my side.

The dirty swine had killed him! So I began to see red. I wanted to go look for him, but I couldn't! It was this thought that obsessed me as we jumped into their second line, and from there on I remember very little. Things were vague and unreal. Some incidents were impressed on my mind for the moment, but as I look back on it now, it all seems impersonal.

The person who doesn't drink may not understand the simile, but when a man is on a drinking bout he will remember everything up to a certain point. From then on everything is a blur. The next morning the boys at the office will tell him of some

weird thing he may have done the night before and he may have a hazy recollection that something of the kind did happen, but he never can be sure.

So it is with the soldier in an attack. He goes along for a certain length of time with a clear mind on which is registered vivid impressions. Then the impressions grow dimmer and dimmer until there is no surface left on which they can place themselves.

In the second line we had fighting, fairly stiff for a moment. There were grunts and groans, then silence, except for the never ending crash of the cursed barrage. Panting for breath, we stood in the trench waiting for the time to come when we could move on again. Selected parties were scurrying here and there looking for the entrances to the Boche dugouts. Some prisoners were standing near by waiting for an escort to take them down the line. Others came tumbling out of their dugouts

about one pace ahead of a sharp pointed British bayonet.

What a confusion there was!

One man was sitting in the muck giving a first aid treatment to his leg and shouting at the same time: "Bring some of them ——— ——— Boches here to carry me down."

Another fellow was ill, violently ill from the powder fumes. The odors were fearful.

As I waited, half stupefied, the fellow next me lurched forward onto the ground, a piece of something in his neck. Whatever it was, it had sailed right under his helmet and gone through his neck. I wondered who he was. It struck me what a useless thing a helmet could be. I wanted to take mine off and throw it away. It was heavy, and hot. Then I thought of the fellow who had wiped the sweat from his head. No, I wouldn't throw it away. But I must do something. I couldn't stand inactive.

Why the hell didn't the barrage move on and let us get out of the stinking place?

I looked at the chap who had got it in the neck—lucky devil—lying there so quiet and peaceful—done, finished with it all. I wanted to turn him over to see who he was. No, I wouldn't do that.

Just then someone shouted in my ear. I shouted in answer, but I have no idea what I said. Someone offered me a cigarette; I remember that. I lit it, wondering if my hand would shake. It didn't, and I remember how pleased I was over it. Outwardly, then, I was calm. But on the inside every nerve in me cried for action. This standing, waiting—it was torture.

The prisoners moved off to the rear. Another hour, and for them the war would be over. While lighting another cigarette, something cracked me on the back.

"Got one at last," flashed through my mind. I wondered why I didn't fall over, when in front of me bounced Tommy. I

fell on his neck and we had another cigarette. He yelled in my ear: "The concussion of a blinkin' Boche shell blew me about ten feet. Couldn't find you again until daylight."

Sure enough it was daylight. I had never noticed the change. My mind had been on other things than day and night. I had realized I could see easier than before, but I hadn't put it down to daylight.

The barrage slackened for a few seconds, then increased its intensity again. It was the signal to get ready for a forward move. So we gave our equipment a hitch and prepared for the last spasm by creeping a little closer to the barrage. It was movement we wanted to relieve the strain of standing still. Three lines were all we had to take and take them we did.

The barrage performed its miracle of stepping forward and we were into their trench before the Boches had time to think.

The third line was in fairly good condi-

tion with dugouts a-plenty and full of Fritzies. It was a complicated process to chase them out, but it always pleases the British Tommies when they get a chance at the job. Dashing along the trench, we post a man at each entrance to the underground shelters, then down into one of the end ones some one shouts in the best German possible, "Raus mit you!"

Occasionally a rifle shot is the answer, but generally it is lurid, if unintelligible, language which we interpret as consigning us to the deepest and hottest corner of a certain mythical spot. At the same time we trace indecent allusions to the memory of our ancestors.

Our reply is emphatic and usually takes the form of a bomb, or if necessary, bombs, loosed down the stairways. Wild groans and squeals reach our ears, or the echo of clattering feet down a corridor. If the latter, the boys get down the stairs in time to hurry the stampede by the use of one or two more bombs. This always causes Fritz

to seek the first exit to open air. At the top, he meets another Tommy who is waiting for him. Fritz's hands shoot into the air and at the same instant he yells "Kamerad."

The boys search him for bombs or other weapons, using his body as a blockade to the exit, much to the annoyance and disgust of the other little Boches who are frantically clamoring to get out. It's no telling what these mad British will do, so they shout, swear, groan and weep while the merry business goes on.

Trenches cleared of prisoners, consolidation starts. Parapets are reversed, the Lewis and machine guns take up positions, trench mortars, light and heavy, arrive at the same time with engineers and signal men; carrying parties bring up ammunition, water, supplies, etc. Ambulance men fix up the wounded in the trench, and the same old barrage is still resting in front of us as a protection.

The Germans shell us—not very accu-

rately, perhaps—but we don't heed a thing like that now, as we are busy working and our minds are occupied. In the air as on the ground is the continuous rat-a-tat of machine guns. The enemy's aviators are trying to find us; our fellows won't let them. So there is much and brilliant fighting high over the bloody field.

The signalers string their wires, a dug-out is selected as headquarters, and around the corner comes our colonel, all smiles and happiness.

"Good work, boys!"

That is all, but his voice quivers. He has seen what we have left behind us. Scattered here and there over the earth for half a mile, in all shapes and positions, lay the price we have paid for our three lines of trenches.

The Germans are fairly quiet. They are "up in the air" and are bothering us but little.

I miss Tommy, but even as I miss him

he shows up, dragging a sandbag full of junk after him. He has been souvenir hunting! He drops his bag and we shake hands silently.

"Many gone?" I ask.

"Dunno. Been searching the dugouts for these tin hats. Got a peach here, too. All sorts of ornaments on it. Show you when we get out."

"When do we go out?"

"Dunno."

We eat, save the word, our macconachie ration, which is something no man has been able to analyze. It is the dietary X put into a tin can and sealed up. As we eat, troops come pouring into our trench over the rear wall.

"We're your relief. Good work you did to-day."

We didn't believe them when they mentioned relief, but our corporal, who by now was in command of our platoon, came along, collected us and away we went, over

the top, but backward towards billets, a bath, "eats," and rest. As we went in the gathering dusk, the ambulance men were coming forward with the stretchers to search for the wounded.

As the Germans fight, it is not possible to go out in the daylight to look for your wounded. If you do, and they see you, machine guns will blaze and shells will come your way in distressing numbers. The presence of the Red Cross will not save you. Their theory is that if a wounded man must lay in the mud all day, infection will be pretty sure to attack the wound and the man will lose life, a limb or be held in hospital longer than would have been necessary in ordinary circumstances.

That is why, as we go back, we meet the stretcher bearers on their rounds. We pass by silently. We know now who of our platoon has paid the price. We are sorry. They were good boys, good pals, good soldiers. But with our sorrow is a tinge of

RED CROSS STRETCHER-BEARERS AT WORK

gladness, for we know that some of those who have "gone west" are happy at last, and that we have done a good day's work toward helping to bring the end of the war so much the nearer.

X

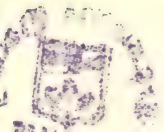
A RAT is a rat, and in France and Belgium it is a four-legged animal varying in size from a squirrel to a fox terrier, depending on the bloodiness of the part of the line in which he is born and raised.

In British army slang there is also another rat. It weighs more than a hundred pounds, is four or five feet long and black in color, with a waist line of about eighteen inches. Some rat! you will say. It surely is some rat! Its killing power—just one rat—may be anywhere from fifty to five hundred men in the same number of seconds.

The rat is a cylindrical container which holds gas—that foul, stinking, strangulating form of gas that the Prussians gave to an astonished world on April 22, '15, at Ypres.

It is ghastly and hellish, this gas, a con-

THEIR FIRST EXPERIENCE OF GAS



trivance of men the devil would be ashamed to accept in his dominions, and yet, in defense, we have had to use it.

We were at ——— a few days after the "show," to be exact, just behind ———, having a rest (according to a divisional order). Our "rest" consisted in carrying rats from a spot along a peaceful highway known as ——— road, to certain parts of the front line. It sounds very simple, I know, but it generally took from seven or eight o'clock one evening to about the same time next morning.

Seven o'clock in the evening found us crowded in a motor lorrie bound for work, minus the lunch pails. We ran up in these lorries to well within shell range; then each officer, with his men, went on foot to the dump.

The dump is the place closest to the firing line that supplies may be brought to for the troops holding the line, and it may be anywhere from five hundred yards to

two thousand yards behind the line, depending on the lay of the land.

It was a case of first to the dump, first served, each party being handed a certain number of rats which they must deliver to a certain spot. As there were a great many parties, it used to be a hard race; the reward, billets earlier.

The dump we raced for was about a mile from where we left the lorries, through the usual ghost-ridden ruins of a village, stark naked walls standing in grotesque shadows and shapes, with here and there a shaft of yellow light peering through and dancing and flickering on another wall as though pleased that even a soldier of any description would use the battered hulks.

Into one of these cellars we could go and then into a communication trench and on to the dump, winding, twisting, slipping, falling, cursing as we went. This was the slow way; on top was the quick way, along the ——— road which the dump was near.

True, we might get shelled, but "what the Hell?" Wasn't it quicker and easier? It was against orders, too, but then we could get there so much faster. Maybe we had to flop when a machine gun went into action, and flop we did, not bothering about position, place or gracefulness. Just a plain, simple flop.

Sometimes a stray bullet whirred over head, but we never ducked. You never hear the bullet that gets you, so why worry?

So every night we raced for this dump. Our officer always left it to his men whether we took the top or the trench. Almost needless to say, we took the top road every night, sometimes getting there first, sometimes not. We used four men to a rat—two for carrying and two for relief—loaded up quickly and went into the trench, for we had to go into it the rest of the way. We couldn't take too many chances with that stuff.

So we would start on the long leg of our

journey, about twelve hundred yards through the very flat country around this district. Thus on the long journey, sweating, struggling with our rats, we would stagger along until out of breath, and then squat in the bottom of the trench with the eternal fag going, as well as a continuous stream of profane and lurid discussion of the day's doings or of some N. C. O. who had caused displeasure. Then up and on again, ever on toward the flares.

Soon we would come to the support lines, with the usual drowsy sentry and the smell of cooking in the air, with every now and then a snore—for the support line takes things easy while they may, never knowing when their pals in the front line may need them. Again we halt and hear the day's news of the line; of the tall, lanky officer who came on a couple of weeks ago, forgot where he was, didn't stoop, and got it right through the ear. "Yes, had a Hell of a time getting him down to bury him. Was

so long, you know. Couldn't get him around the corners on a stretcher; had to put him in a blanket and drag him down. Don't know what the devil they want to grow so long for."

And so it goes. You hear there wasn't much shell fire to-day. "They were feeling for some of our eighteen pounders back by the railroad with their heavy stuff. Didn't bother supports, though. Dropped some 'Minnies' in the front line. Got four of our men working up there. Didn't need to bring them down. Nothing left but scraps. Put 'em in a sandbag and filled up a shell hole."

So, for the news of the day in the line we tell them the rumors from the rear; how the division is going to Egypt or Salonica, then after a rest, a real one, we are going to take over garrison duty in India, relieving the territorial battalions that haven't been out yet.

Then we pick up our rats and continue

toward the flares. It is midnight and almost quiet. Now and then a rifle shot, a few spats from a machine gun and another flare. Then all is quiet and we go slowly and silently along to our next stop. We know it well. If you were blind you couldn't pass it. The odor is overpowering, and the ground is powdered white with chloride of lime. The powdering must be done for sanitary reasons, for it is a man's foot. Not much; you only see the boot. But there it is, and it is known to all who pass that way as "The Door Knob" and the last halt to rest before reaching the front line.

This part of the man, toe up, was dug into when this new communication trench was built. There it stayed, bidding those who entered "welcome" and those who came out, "good-bye" and "good luck."

From now on, we go in silence. Each man knows his job and what to do. Any cursing is under his breath, for our friends across the wire must not know of our little

surprise or the front line will get severely strafed in an effort to smash our rats, and this would not be good. So with a grunt and a groan, we pick them up and trudge silently on. Where we are placing them to-night is only eighty yards from Fritz, and as we slip them into their place we must be very careful that we do not knock them one against the other.

A twist and a turn and we are in the front line, and we put our first pet into its place, ready and waiting to take its revenge for the dastardly crime of the Huns at Ypres. And with a loving pat we leave it to put the next in place. On one end of the fire platform stands the sentry, head and shoulders above the parapet. He may as well be dead for all the movement he makes. Yet those keen eyes of his are searching and watching. At his feet is his pal, stretched out on his back, asleep and snoring, the only noise in that line except the hiss of flares as they rise and fall. Neither

notices us. There is none of that chattering as in the supports. It is all business, life and death, and—when not on duty—rest, preparing for more business.

In go our rats silently, methodically, and we turn to go out the "down" trench, for there is a system, highly efficient, and you go down another way to allow the great string of rats coming "up" to continue without a stop, for we must pay "them" back in their own coin.

As we leave, the flares are still going up and down, but already we are too far away to hear the hiss. Our backs are to them, and we are traveling fast, as we have far to go for breakfast and are hungry.

As we go, we pass the night's toll of suffering, the "walking wounded"—a man with his arm in a sling, another one ill, and a third riding the back of a stretcher bearer, his ankle broken by falling through a hole in the trench floor. All three are supremely happy and inform us as they rest

and we pass, that they are "Blighty bound."

"Congratulations," "lucky devils" and "rub it in," we call to them as we pass. Then they are forgotten as we come into the open and start racing for our lorries with another party of ratters.

As we climb on them and the motors start, dawn begins to break, flares cease, rifle and machine-gun fire is heard, with some artillery, and we know that the boys in the front line are "standing to," guarding our rats, until such time as they may be turned loose on the Hun who introduced them to the world.

XI

"YOU will report to the War Office, London, for instructions."

Thus read an order handed to me by my colonel a few days later. I had reported to him in obedience to an order which had reached me down in our hut a few minutes before. He shook hands and congratulated me.

"As an officer, you know, you'll have to shave every day," he said.

So I left him and my battalion, a buck private for the last time. It hurt to leave them, too. I had lived with them, these boys, for more than a year. We had crossed a continent and an ocean together; we had suffered and celebrated together, but a soldier has no business to be full of sentiment, so we went down to the estaminet, touched glasses and grasped hands, and I hurried to railhead.

By that time I was rather awed by the feeling of responsibility that had been coming over me. I gladly accepted the chance for promotion, but nevertheless it rather spoiled my trip down the line. I kept wondering all the time whether I was fit for the job.

Lots of sleep made the time to London go quickly and the War Office passed me just as quickly to a training school for officers. Over that training school I am going to draw a thick veil. It makes my head ache yet to think of it. Work? There is no word to describe it. What weight didn't drip from me with a thousand and one kinds of labor I lost through anxiety as to whether I would pass my exams. I did pass, though, and while I was recovering my breath I was sent out to my new regiment in France.

The old play times with my Canadian pals were gone. Responsibilities left no time for the light and lightsome hours of

song, and story, and games with which we passed the time in billets. I missed the boys but I fell in love with my new friends, my "Jocks"; the finest fellows in the world.

While "Tommy Atkins" is the British soldier's nickname and he is known by it all over the world, inside the army he divides the units and renames them to suit himself. By these names they are known, so far as he is concerned.

"Jock" is the name he has given to all Scotch troops, whether they be the kilted "Ladies from Hell" or the plain pantalooned lowland regiments. And "Jock" is about the hardest fighting, toughest muscled individual who ever crossed to France. Colonials and everybody else are included in this judgment. He assimilates the punishment of long hikes, mud and water, insufferable hours in the fire trenches, and the other little pleasantries of life in France with a grin and then seems to ask for more.

Take him out of the trenches and see that

THE AUTHOR IN HIS UNIFORM AS 2ND LIEUTENANT IN A SCOTCH REGIMENT

he gets comfortable billets, three meals a day and his tot of rum at night and he will "grouse" for hours. France and everyone who comes within range of his voice is a part of his condemnation, but the next second he will sit down and write to his mother, his sweetheart, or his wife and wee laddies letters full of uncomplaining gossip, optimism and love, always promising to be home soon and always knowing he is lying in his promise.

At night out of the trenches you will find the "Jocks" in the estaminet, a room reeking with stale tobacco smoke and the odor of perspiring bodies, their glasses of watery beer in front of them. Dimly you see through the haze, over in the corner behind the bar, madame making change and pushing filled glasses toward a dozen struggling men, roaring with them Harry Lauder favorites or some old folk song with sentiment in every line. But I must not call it roaring—these songs. The boys sing well, their

voices are fresh and full of music and many a night have I had a lump brought to my throat as the strains of "Annie Laurie" or some one of the other north country melodies came floating to me across the night, borne by the volume of a hundred voices.

The next night finds them up the line repairing their trenches, bailing water out of dugouts, shoveling mud, carrying rations or lying keen-eyed behind their Lewis guns watching for signs of mischief from Fritz. The mud may have oozed to their skin, they may be cold almost to numbness, but they are not "grousing" now. They may be whispering of the folks at home, of the shooting in the hills or the fishing in the firths. It may be they are speculating concerning the fate of one of the platoon, wounded last time in, or gossiping of the battalion, or politics, but they calmly accept the life as it is.

If they are moving up to attack they seem to fear nothing. If such a sensation as fear

does enter their hearts not a soul would ever suspect it. They are not serious, however. Their jaws are not set in the firm, determined line that delights the story writer, yet they are not boisterous. They move along carelessly and easily, cursing at some delay in front and wondering if they will get their rations at the new line to-morrow night.

Pals have turned over home addresses to one another with no word of comment. It is all understood. They have said who may take any of their parcels that arrive if they are not there; letters are always returned to the senders with "wounded," "killed in action," or "missing" written across them. Parcels are bequeathed to a particular pal or to the platoon to be divided among all the men.

It gives one a queer feeling to sit down and eat a bit of cake made by loving hands at home for "the boy" out at the front when you know that boy is "out there" some-

where, a part, for all time, of the earth that is being churned into water or into dust; that he has given his all to the cause of his country.

It is the unwritten law of the army, though—this custom—and "Jock's" spirit, while it responds to grief for the loss of a friend, cannot be kept down long.

Two men came to my platoon while we were in the Loos sector. One was a boy of twenty, and this was his first time out. He was tall; six feet two, and thin as a rail. McCluskey was his name. His pal was just about medium height with a heart as big as his body. He loved McCluskey. MacKenzie was his name.

McCluskey and MacKenzie were put in different sections by my sergeant, but they came to me at once and complained. They wanted to be put together. So I made the change, putting them in the first section, where they stayed. When we went to the trenches for our tour of duty or were out

on carrying parties, MacKenzie always was leading man, with McCluskey right behind, and they would fight if any one attempted to usurp their places.

In traveling through trenches you frequently come to what is known as an overhead traverse. These are barricades built across the top of the trench to prevent enemy observation or fire down long, straight lengths of trenches. On reaching one of these MacKenzie would say: "Mind ye'r topsy, McCluskey" (in other words, "Duck your nut"), and McCluskey would answer, "right ye are, Mac."

Again, in a trench, you will always find places where the trench floor has fallen in. On coming to one of these holes I would hear MacKenzie call softly: "Jock and Jill, McCluskey," and McCluskey answer: "Right ye are, Mac."

Soon I was very careful to make certain that these two men always got just behind me so I could listen to their conversation,

until one night, while we were on a carrying party, the tragedy came. Passing through a piece of trench blown in by shell fire and marked by Fritz with fixed rifles, one of their bullets went through McCluskey's head. The boy dropped without a murmur. We stopped long enough to put him to one side until we should be coming "down" again. MacKenzie helped, but never a word did he say.

Coming down, we fixed up a litter and carried him back to billets, the company turning out the next morning to give him a military funeral. I watched MacKenzie as the tears rolled down his face.

After lunch I sent for him to get McCluskey's home address verified, and when he came in I told him how sorry I was over his loss of his pal. He told me he knew the "damn fool" would get his head blown off as it stuck so high into the air, and, anyway, he never would have made a "good enou' trench warrior."

That was the way one "Jock," plainly bowed with grief, took the death of his best friend.

My personal orderly, Dempsey, was a youngster of twenty-two, who had been in France since September, 1914, and only home on leave once in that time. Really, he didn't care much about going home. He had more fun "out here," he told me many times. He was the best natured boy I ever knew, and no matter what the circumstances nor how trying our position, he always could find something from which to extract a laugh. I valued him very highly for these characteristics and permitted him a little more latitude than is customary.

In November, 1916, our battalion was on the Ancre and in the advance. Even so, we were having an unusual run of hard luck, and this especially applied to our company, which seemed to get into every hot hole in the vicinity.

On November 13, on a dark, foggy

morning, we opened up an attack, our company being one of the first to go over. With Dempsey at my side we started off, the company about 140 strong. We made our objective and consolidated what we could by about two o'clock that afternoon, and sat down to wait for what would happen. But nothing very much happened, greatly to our surprise. Supplies were brought up, reserves came along to help us hold the line and Dempsey roamed the field looking for souvenirs.

The night of the fifteenth we were relieved to go behind the lines and reorganize. About three o'clock the next morning we arrived in billets, dead tired but very happy. I had been reported killed and my valise, with a change of clothing and my bed, had been sent down the line. Dempsey was equal to the occasion, however, and produced a bed—from where shall always remain a mystery. Things went bad in the line and at six o'clock that evening, a considerably battered bunch of men, we

marched away to brigade reserve behind the lines. The men were still pretty much exhausted from their previous three days and roundly cursed the troops in the front, but up they went.

On the night of the seventeenth we were ordered to relieve a knocked about battalion in a new part of the line a little further south. Considering that I had one other officer and sixty-seven effectives by that time, in my company, it struck us as a rather ghastly joke.

Eventually we reached the new line, if you can call it that, since there were no trenches. Only a couple of dugouts could be found. I divided the company into two parts, half in each dugout. The rest of the night I spent getting our bearings, with Dempsey's help, while the men stocked up the shelters with rations and water. At five o'clock in the morning all the men with me turned into our shelter —one of the kind known as a "tube."

If you took half a subway car, stuck it

in the ground and covered the top with two or three feet of earth, you would have a "tube" dugout. Inside are seats as in the subway, and through the center runs a rudely constructed table.

Instantly the seats were crowded with "Jocks," full fighting kit on, dog tired, and trying to rest. In the center of the table I placed some rations. Just outside, two sentries were posted while inside we slept.

Six o'clock came, and with it merry hell! The Canadians just south of us were launching an attack and the Germans had put a barrage on our lines. I went outside to see my sentries. It was just breaking day and a light snow was falling. The shelling was heavy and was being aided by machine-gun fire. I turned to go in and rout out the men, as I thought we were to be attacked. Just as I stepped in, a shell lit at the door, seriously wounding the two sentries. We dragged them inside and the shelling increased to such violence there

was no use putting other sentries out. I held a candle while the Red Cross men bandaged the wounded, both with bad thigh wounds. The candle was blown out time and time again by the concussion of the shells and the place reeked with burnt powder and blood.

All day this fire continued. The entrance to our dugout was blown in twice so that we had to dig it out to get fresh air. One man crept through the opening for a moment. We never found him. The rear corner was blown off and some of the men were made violently ill by the fumes, but still we sat there, waiting for the crash that would hurl us into eternity. It never came, though, and a little after ten that night it grew quiet enough for us to risk leaving our shelter. We had two badly wounded men to get to the dressing station and water and rations to locate, but the relief to the nerves after that day of hell was so great that the men went out on their parties softly singing. Exhaus-

tion could not stop them. The rest of the night and the next day were comparatively quiet and that evening we were relieved.

After we had got out of the trenches and were walking along the road toward our billets I said to Dempsey: "Well, what did you think of day before yesterday?"

"Well, sir, it was like this," he replied. "When they opened up at six o'clock I thought it was just the usual 'stand to' racket. About eight I thought they were going to attack. By nine I thought they were attacking right beside us. By eleven I didn't know what to think. And by one—well, I was so disgusted I just pulled my tin hat over my face and said: 'To hell with it.'"

That is the spirit of those fine lads from Scotland. "Never heed" is their cry. "Let's get on with it."

XII

It was at a detail camp back of the Ancre on our first long rest in weeks, that I met Susan. We had had little but parades to bother us for a fortnight or so.

Susan was on her way home from India to Plymouth, with her regiment, when the war broke out. She was about ten days out from India on that momentous fourth of August, she would tell you with her quivering mouth and big, soft eyes if you fed her enough sugar. So you may surmise, Susan was one of "the old contemptibles," and did her bit for the world during those strenuous first months of the war.

She is still doing it, too, passing from month to month and year to year, going her way over icy, treacherous stone roads in the winter, sinking to her belly in the clinging mud of spring, enjoying intensely the all too few months of summer. But never in all

the time has Susan lost her proud bearing. Always is the arch of her neck at its highest, the swish of her tail quick and full of life. Her step, too, is elastic, as it should be, for is she not D company commander's horse?

She has all the proud traditions of her regiment behind her; the oldest regiment in the British army with its history that dates back nearly to 1400, and still held up by the finest fighting men on earth, the Scotchmen, who fight with a pride of race and regiment that none can surpass. Even as the men were Scotch, so was Susan.

She whispered to me, with her sensitive ears ever alert, of her wonder at the whole business; it was so strange, so bewildering. What was it all about? This see-sawing back and forth of men, horses and guns? Every one seemed to be in a hurry, rushing from here to there, then back again with no apparent reason. For five or six days her master would take her out every day at the

head of his company and she would see the men; clean, cheery, singing men, swinging along headed by their pipers. How she loved those pipers! And how the men loved them! They would lapse into silence as the pipes started, and trudge along with their thoughts away off in the beautiful Scotch highlands or in "auld Reekie," or maybe they would be buried in memories of pleasant duties at the Castle.

Not so, old Susan, though. That was the time when she showed the boys what a credit she was to their never fading glory. She pranced proudly, tail and neck; yes, every muscle a-quiver, to the tune of those pipes. The men saw her and liked her for it. One of their own, they called her. Her captain on her back felt her pride, and took his seat a little more erectly with a tighter grip of her side, and let her prance.

Such was Susan and her Scotchmen.

Then they would all leave for five or six days, marching off silently and heavily

loaded, looking like mushrooms under those funny tin things they wore on their heads instead of the jaunty Glengarries, and Susan would be left alone at the detail camp with her groom. Not really alone, though, for detail camp is a busy place. There were lots of horses, the other company horses, but none of the "old reliables." They had all gone; some had been killed, many died in service, but all were gone.

Peter, who used to play polo in India, and carried A company's captain, had a bomb dropped on him from a German aeroplane while they were marching away from Mons.

Jill, poor old Jill, used to carry B company's captain. While the company was engaged in a rear guard action one day during the retreat, she had come into close contact with the enemy and under heavy shell fire. She was left standing quiet, held by her groom, while the captain fought with his company. A shell lit close by, terrify-

ing the animal. With a snort of terror she broke from the groom, who already was sinking to the ground with a piece of shell casing through his chest, and galloped madly down the road toward the enemy. But not for far.

Their machine-guns stopped old Jill suddenly, so that when she dropped her body slid ten or twelve feet along the road. And even as she fell, she died, lying on her back, her four legs sticking into the air like four direction posts at a cross road.

Then there was Jack, of C company, who carried seven company commanders in as many days, each one leaving as suddenly as he came. Some had dismounted to go forward and reconnoiter and never had returned. Others had lurched out of the saddle as though drunk, lying on the road with a dark blot slowly spreading out from beneath them. Then some poor, foot sore, weary "Tommy" had mounted him and they had continued, always toward the rear.

After Jill's death Jack and Susan had become pals, and as she thought of him now she moved restlessly on her picket line, for she had loved Jack. They had often compared notes and wondered what it all meant; the continual bang, the continual wailing and screaming noises in the air. They had come up these roads ten days before, then they had gone back the same way, the men staggering along, eyes almost shut from lack of sleep and with faces haggard and drawn and covered with dust and beard. When they rested at the roadside they slept even as they touched the ground and it was hard to waken them. They, Jack and Susan, were hungry. So was everybody, but when it was time to eat it also happened it was time to fight. There would be more bangs, more flashes, and they would start again, always toward the rear, only there would be a few less men and those remaining would stagger a little more in their walk. Some would drift along

with their eyes shut, but always they cried: "Stick it, Jock," or "Never heed." Wonderful men!

Passing at a gallop, going back to take up other positions, would go the artillery. Not the smart, swanky artillery of the old parade ground days, for nothing sparkled and glittered in the sunlight now. Everything was covered with grime and dust. The men sat their horses and limbers as dead men might and they dressed in all manner of costumes; everything but regulation. While firing they had discarded caps and tunics; in limbering up to move away, done at the last possible moment, these very necessary parts of the uniform were invariably left behind, and as they passed through deserted villages the men would pick up what they could find, so that you might see some young driver, dragging his gun along at a dead gallop, sitting the saddle in a frock coat and top hat. Those were strange days, though.

How Jack and Susan got through such times one can only guess. What a pity horses cannot really speak and tell us of their worries and troubles and what they think of it all.

Susan nearly could. Her wonderfully eloquent ears spoke as do a Frenchman's hands and the shrug of his shoulders. And her mouth! If horses had kissable mouths, Susan's certainly was one of them. What horse does not have eyes that tell you a story if you care to read? Susan's seemed to grow sad, even tragic, as I fed her more sugar and she told me more of the days gone by.

Now they had turned, going forward for the second time. The men straightened their shoulders, stepping out with an alert, quick step, and began that wonderful race from the Aisne to the North Sea. Susan told me of one bitter night when they felt the tang of salt air in Belgium, borne by a sweeping wind, cold and cruel, from that sea, sweeping with it rain that was cruel, too, in its violence.

It beat into their faces so that they were nearly blinded. It beat onto Jack's chest as he walked at the head of his company, until he staggered and his breath came hard, so that his captain got off to walk. Even then Jack staggered, tossing his head as though to shake off that which was gradually creeping over him. It was no use. He was done. He stopped from sheer inability to go on. His hindquarters swung from side to side, gaining momentum until he finally crashed to the ground, finished. Then his captain, out of the tenderness of his heart, took out his gun and with his eyes blinded by tears, sent one more soul out of its earthly shell, for King and Country. For horses have souls, even if they do not appear in the casualty lists and have a wooden cross with "R. I. P." on it.

Susan whinnied as she passed and there was no answer from her old friend lying there by the road. And she kept on whinnying all the night. Even as she whispered of it to me months later she whin-

nied as though she would call Jack back. But in answer came the nicker and the whinny of all those horses on the picket line, for Susan was their queen. They looked to her for advice and consolation in the strange life into which they had come, for, as I said before, she was an "old contemptible," and could tell them. She could even tell them how it felt to be wounded, but she wouldn't take the time now. It was noon, and feed time, and Susan was a good soldier. She took good care of herself that she might live and render full value to her country. So with her nose buried in a feed bag and the warm sun on her back, she would have no more of me.

In the afternoon life in the detail camp is a busy one, for this is where all the supplies, food, rations, ammunition, etc., are brought from the railhead for the battalion and then forwarded nightly as far as possible toward the trenches by horse and wagon. To this point the men from the trenches come down

and carry the stuff up to their position in the line.

Stores of bombs are laid out and rations are put in bags and marked with the name of the company for which they are intended. The mail for the day is sorted and about half past three or so the limbers for each company are loaded and started off on their night's work. They will return about three in the morning, maybe, for they go as close to the trenches as possible, coming under machine-gun and shell fire, so that the infantry will not have too far to come. The foot sloggers have enough to do without unnecessarily tiring themselves.

Here, too, to this camp come the men from the line who are going on leave. They are happy. Once more they will see their loved ones and have ten days of good times. From their tent or hut, that night, as they lie there waiting to be paid and leave for railhead, you will hear them singing old

folk songs of Scotland; the most wonderful songs of all, full of sentiment, and sung so they go right into your heart. They change at times to Harry Lauder stuff; rollicking happy old Harry, that also is good to hear.

Then there are the last drafts of reinforcements in camp also, just come in from railhead to-day. They will wait here until the battalion comes out of the line, then be apportioned among the different companies. Some of them are new men, first time out. They are curious, excited, eager to know the whys and wherefores of everything, but also they are of very good spirits, as one man who had left England on Christmas day testified in a letter: "For a Christmas present this year the government have given me a trip abroad, but what a trip! Mud, mud, everywhere; mud and a roaring noise. Even the tea looks like mud. But it's great!"

That's the attitude of the new arrival.

The old timer who carries one, two, or

even more wound stripes on his arm looks for old friends. Failing to find them, he looks for anything to pinch which is laying about loose and which will add to his material comfort.

It is a busy place, all right, the detail camp, with its picket line of horses standing under an overhead shelter; all round, the mud; limp walls of two or three rows of little bell tents where live the drivers and grooms of the transports, along with the supply officer and his men. Draft and leave men are tucked away in here and at the end of the row are two or three big tents where the supplies are stored until it is time to send them up the line.

It is the hour for the afternoon start now and the limbers are crowded in front of these tents taking on their sandbags of charcoal, food and mail for the fellows up in front. In the general excitement of getting the limbers away, I grab a little bit of sugar and go back to the horse lines and Susan.

She whinnies as I come up, for she is lonesome, and those who have spent much time at the front and have a memory, hate to be lonesome.

I gave her part of the sugar and stroked her near flank where she had received a wound. She seemed to sense my sympathy and as best she could she whispered to me of one day at the beginning of the second Battle of Ypres when the battalion was stretched in billets for a rest.

That day the Germans had turned loose their gas. Things were going badly in the line and the battalion was rushed up to reinforce. The company commanders had gone forward on their horses at top speed to report at headquarters in Ypres for instructions. Then they were to meet the battalion and go on.

As they got near to the city the roads became almost impassable. Confusion seemed to reign supreme. People—civilians—came down the road in unending

masses. Old people, bent with age, looked neither to right nor left, but hobbled on as fast as they could, talking to themselves or shouting aloud some loved one's name. Little kiddies, barely able to walk, toddled along crying, wandering aimlessly, following the crowd. Going up toward the city were the troops, marching at the quick.

Ahead lay the city itself, and Susan confessed she was terrified. The cool hand of her captain, however, calmed her and restored her confidence. It was fearful to see, though, that city enveloped in a pall of smoke, fed by its beautiful, historic buildings all on fire now; a pall of smoke so dense the tops of the buildings could scarce be seen. Away to the front as a small rise was topped, appeared clouds of fog, which was not fog at all, but German gas. It was rolling toward the already nearly ruined city.

Ypres was a roaring mass of flames; their crackling increased a hundred-fold by the crash of exploding shells, making livid

flashes of red, which spurted through the smoke and cut into the dull red of the greater fire which was consuming the town.

Toward this Susan galloped, terror in her heart, controlled by the sense of duty that is ingrained in the army horse as it is in the army man.

On the outskirts of the city conditions were worse, if possible, than they had been along the approaches. All about lay overturned wagons, or pieces of them, horses, men, motor lorries. In one little yard one wheel of a transport wagon stood up ready to go on when somebody brought the rest of the wagon. Even the inanimate things defied the Hun in his attempts at destruction.

In the city the crash of exploding shells was deafening. Walls were crumbling into roaring furnaces out of which belched great pillars of smoke. These pillars the German artillery used as ranging marks, but it was firing indiscriminately so that the air

THE STAFF GOING ON A ROUND OF INSPECTION BEHIND THE FRONT LINE

reeked with powder, brick dust and more horrible smells.

Susan saw in the broken window of what once had been a house, a child's leg dangling through the pane. Even as she looked, a woman tore it from the window with a mad shriek and went screaming down the street swinging it round her head like a club. She went toward the Cloth Hall and her death, for the Cloth Hall was a thing of beauty, and so a mark for the Hun's artillery.

Susan told me how she snorted with terror as she nearly stepped on the head and shoulders of a man. She shied and almost unseated her captain.

I am not trying to horrify you. It is war —German war—that I am trying to tell you of. War on any body and any place that gets in Kultur's way. It horrified Susan and it horrifies me. So it must you, too, when you know of it.

It was Susan's fate to see no more, for

it was here she was wounded. I am sure she sighed with relief as she struggled to tell me, as plainly as she could, how there had come a blinding flash nearby. There was so much noise she didn't hear the explosion. After the flash—less than a second after—she felt a blow on her near flank. It felt like a branding iron at first, but it sank into the flesh, burning. It was hot; oh, so hot! And it kept on burning as though it were a ball of fire. She bucked. She screamed.

Have you ever heard a horse scream in pain and terror?

Then she started running.

There was no hand on her bridle. The captain had gone—gone without her knowing how or when, and she never knew. But she ran, mad with pain, fortunately in the right direction. She may have knocked people over. She thinks she did, but she doesn't remember. She saw long lines of khaki moving rapidly toward the city, but

they paid no attention to her. She was only one of numberless horses without riders, and added just so much to the confusion.

Finally exhaustion forced her to a walk and so the veterinarians found her. They stopped her, spoke kind words to her, soothed her, and all the time worked on her torn flank. It was only a flesh wound, fortunately, and not serious, and as they talked Susan forgot her fear. But the pain was still intense and she was slowly led off to a field where there were other horses, injured, with masters lost, confined in a kind of loosely constructed corral. So she left her battalion for three months.

When she returned to the regiment for duty everything had changed. The old faces were gone, many of them never to reappear, but she was treated with the most flattering respect by the other horses at detail camp and at once acknowledged to be their leader.

Time passed. The men continued their

coming and going. For six, eight, ten, even fifteen days, they would be away and then they would come back weary and worn, eyes bloodshot, feet torn, uniforms in rags. Trench warfare was well under way. Sometimes her captain wouldn't come back and she would mourn the loss of one more friend and wonder who her next captain might be.

Susan says the war has taught her one thing: a brave man never abuses a dumb animal. Every captain who rode her was gentle and kind. Some of them hurt her back by bobbing all over the saddle, but she was patient with them and helped them while they learned to ride. Sometimes it was hard and strained her temper, but she bore it and never complained. She is one of the heroes of the war.

One of the heroes, I say, because there are hundreds of thousands like her; dumb animals doing their work faithfully and well. They cannot comprehend it all, the

"Good-by, Old Man." The Bombardier and His Dying Friend

crashing, roaring, burning; the crazy rushing about from place to place; the mud; the uncertain feeding. But they go on, willingly and uncomplainingly, and dying.

No greater hero passes away than these horses. Their praises remain unsung. They have no names on the casualty lists and no medals of honor for bravery under fire are struck for them. No one knows of them and—I was going to say no one cares. But there I am wrong. Their drivers and their grooms care, but what can they do? It is part and parcel of the Great War and Susan knows it. So she carries on from month to month until the time shall come for her passing out—just a gentle, dumb, four-legged animal doing her share for King and Country.

XIII

JUST behind the little village of Monchy, or the remains of it, is a cemetery—a British cemetery. In it there is a grave, the same as another thousand or so in the same cemetery. Over it is a little wooden cross, the same as a thousand others, except for the name. That name is the name of my pal. It has "R. I. P." underneath. He has gone with all the others, in the mad excitement of battle; dropping at the head of his men, with victory in sight.

He is gone. I'll never see him again on this old earth, but I remember him. The war has taught me the meaning of that old phrase, "gone but not forgot."

I remember when he first came to Trinity where we were all studying for our commissions. He was young, nineteen, full of life, with all its hopes and ambitions, and unused to military ways. He was always

late for parades, always late for lectures, and late for appointments. Life was so new and full, he had too many things to do.

I remember the last time I saw him. He was leaving the base in France to join his battalion. He was late for the train. It was made up of cattle cars. As it pulled out, he rushed down the hill and flung himself onto the side of the next to the last car, late again. When the time came, though, for his last appointment he was there; a young boy just coming into manhood, but bravely keeping his appointment with death, with trust in God and the fear of no man in his heart. And so he died.

His was just one more wooden cross added to the thousands already there; just one more broken family. He was just one more reason why we must go on, so that the young life will not have been wasted; so that the flower of our manhood which will remain abroad will not have been cut down in vain.

There was a little fellow in my platoon. The boys called him "Charley Chaplin." He was small—undersized—and not very strong. I had often looked at him and wondered how he stood it. He had a little mustache like "Charley's," but his eyes were lifeless and sunk well into his head. He was married, had two children, was over age, but he had come because the rest of the boys had come and he couldn't be called a "slacker." He was doing his thirteenth month in France and was top name on the battalion leave roster.

One day a telegram was handed to me saying that the mother of one of my men had died. The message was signed by the chief of police of his home town. I sent for the man, gave it to him, and he broke down. All he could say was: "I want to go home." His place on the leave roster was about the middle. I sent for "Charley Chaplin," explained the circumstances and asked him if he would change places with this other man.

That wizened, little, dried-up chap, more than a year away from his own wife and kiddies, without a second's hesitation, said, "Certainly, sir," knowing full well that he postponed his own leave six months.

What a heart for a man to possess!

I went to the colonel to obtain his consent and as I explained the circumstances, "Thank God the mud hasn't eaten into the men's souls," he said. "Certainly. Make what arrangements you like."

I did.

The next morning the other man went on ten days' leave and "Charley Chaplin" went to the trenches with his company and what I had feared happened. Our front line was strafed with "Minnies." Dodging one, poor "Charley" ran into another. His thigh was crushed by a piece of casing. It was too much for the little man from the start. We got him to the dressing station, but in the early hours of the morning, his little frame gave a shudder and released his big soul to return where it belonged. One

more British "Tommy" remained in France!

Another little thing I will always remember. Three of us were going up to a front line trench one day to reconnoiter new positions. The enemy were shelling, not heavily but continuously and fairly accurately. We didn't like it and debated whether we should go on. We decided to stick it, so pushed forward. It was a bright, sunny afternoon and it would have been good to be alive had it not been for the racket; one of those days that make you want to roll and stretch out on the grass.

"Hell of a day to die," one of the fellows said, and we told him to shut up.

We had stopped for a minute to sketch in a piece of trench and were all three talking and smoking when another fellow came down the trench as hard as he could leg it. He saw us and slowed up.

"They've got him, fellows, they've got him!" was all he could say.

He stood looking at us and shook like a

leaf. It put the wind up us a bit. We thought maybe the Boches were in the trench. Then he asked for a medical officer and we knew somebody was wounded. We told him where to find what he wanted and went forward to see what we could do. Round a corner we came across an officer lying full length on his back, "out" for good. A piece of shell casing had caught him in the throat and chest.

The thing that struck me was his left breast. It was covered by two rows of service ribbons, but, I thought, "of what use are they to him now?" He was gone; they had not saved him. There they lay on his breast, little bits of color. To us, they said: "Here is a man who has given all his lifetime to his country; now he has given his life." He was gone, and we were the only three who saw.

That sight was vividly on my mind for a long time, and was responsible for the worst fright I ever had.

About a week after this had occurred our

battalion moved into the line and our company took up a front-line position. To get to it, we had to use that same trench. Every time I went through it, my skin had little goose pimples on it.

Word was sent up about two o'clock one morning that I was to report to battalion headquarters.

No one was supposed to travel alone in that part of the line. It was really bad. But not one of the men was idle at the time so I set out alone, knowing I had to pass through the trench that I so hated. Unknown to me, another battalion had been carrying up big trench mortar shells most of the night. They had carried them so far, then set them down right in the middle of the trench for us to carry the rest of the way. They were big, weighed about one hundred pounds, and were in cases.

I started down to headquarters in the blackest of black nights. A flare went up every minute or so, then darkness again. A

shell exploded, throwing its red glare through the blackness for a second, then it would be blacker than ever. I stumbled along till I came to this place where the officer had been knocked out, and blind, unreasoning fear took hold of me. I could see him lying there, leering at me, as though he meant to grab my leg as I passed. I could almost feel his hand around my ankle, then I lit out as fast as I could run, afraid, and badly afraid. The very darkness scared me. I saw things in every corner, terrible things that only come from a distorted imagination. I ran, and in the darkness went crash! over one of these cases holding a shell. I shot right across the top of it, picked myself up and ran harder than ever, and crashed over another one. That stopped me. I nearly broke my legs and pain took the place of fear, so that I sat on a case, rubbing my shins and cursing. My shins hurt terribly, and I was ashamed, and cursed again for being afraid. As I think

of it now, I can laugh. It was funny even the next day, but I never traveled alone any more in that trench at night.

I often remember the time we were in a certain sector holding our line with outposts. It was almost open warfare. The ground was a mass of stinking, polluted shell holes. Wherever we could find a dugout, we put in a Lewis gun protected by bombers. The trenches were all blown in; in some places so badly we lost all trace of them. We were in the old German line and hardly knew where our supports on either side could be found. It was impossible to move during the daytime, so we slept and ate all day in our dugouts which the Germans had made for us, and at night we ventured forth to get our rations, water, and other necessities to keep us alive, slinking from place to place in the darkness like a gang of street toughs. When daylight broke, we sneaked back to our holes as though afraid of the light.

Down in the holes fires were started in the braziers, which are simply large cans with holes punched in them. Until the fire blazed up everyone choked with the smoke. Rubbing our eyes, we stood around and swore until the smell of bacon overcame the effects of the smoke, tea water bubbled merrily, singing its little song, and then we were happy again. Everyone had breakfast and all was quiet except for the snores of exhausted men.

At the top of the stairs lolled a sentry, watching the ground ahead of him for any movement. Once in awhile he would duck into the stairs as a shell came roaring his way to burst on the roof of the dugout, while thirty feet below a man turned lazily in his sleep, disturbed for a moment, and then continued snoring.

At the foot of the staircase sat the officer on duty sleepily playing "Patience," his head dropping forward now and then to be recovered with a jerk. So the day passed,

for the mud hindered any offensive. It was winter.

Along about half-past three on this day everybody began to stir. My orderly took a can and slipped out of the dugout in the gathering dusk to get water for tea—always the eternal tea. For two nights it had tasted foul. It was almost impossible to drink it. I asked him where he got it. "In a shell hole," he said. So I asked him to take a look at the shell hole. He came back in about half an hour and in a very apologetic tone said he was sorry, but that he couldn't make tea until it got darker so that he could look for another shell hole. The one we had been using, it seemed, had a dead Gordon Highlander and two Boches in it and he supposed I wouldn't want to use that water any more. I didn't.

I remember another man, in the dim days of long ago when the war began. He was mobilized with our company. He was a slight fellow and not very tall, and full of

the very old devil; Jimmy, by name. He was the first man to come before our company commander for punishment, he was the first man in the battalion to be tried by the colonel, he was the first drunk, and the first man to leave camp without a pass and not come back till he got good and ready. In fact, he taught us all how not to be soldiers, and made a general nuisance of himself until the poor old colonel tore his hair in despair. They locked him in the guard room and he got out. We all laughed and encouraged him to some new stunt and the officers became frantic.

Then came our orders to go across from Canada, and he behaved himself on board the transport. In England before we had been ten days in camp, he disappeared. The military police brought him back from Ireland. They had a lively trip, but landed him in camp all right and a court martial placed him in detention barracks, where he stayed until a week before we crossed to

France. When we did cross, the colonel left him behind because he had been in a military prison instead of training with the men. When we got off the boat in France, so did Jimmy.

The company commander nearly had a spasm. So did the colonel. And the company laughed. They gave him a rifle and equipment—he had brought none—and he marched to the line with us, happy at last.

In the trenches he was a glutton for work. No mud was too thick, no job too hard or dangerous. Nothing bothered him. He always had a smile and a joke or a song. When we were out of the line he spent his time in the estaminet or sleeping. So he lived for four or five months happy and content.

Then came the episode of the craters at St. Eloi.

The battalion relieved troops who had consolidated some mine craters which had been blown a few hours before. The Ger-

man artillery turned loose with everything they had in range. It was absolute hell. Men were buried, blown up in the air and buried again. Rifles were rendered useless by the mud. The men lay there waiting for their time to come, for signals were down and it was impossible to establish communication with the rear. Man after man "went out" until our strength was so impaired it was impossible to resist should an attack be made.

Some of the men went crazy and tried to walk out of that hell, and we saw them no more. Through it all lay Jimmy, saying nothing, although nobody could have heard him, the din was so terrific. The tongues and lips of the men were swollen and they crept about pleading with each other for water.

Jimmy's officer beckoned to him. He crawled over. His officer handed him a message marked "Battalion Headquarters." It was a report on the situation, and Jimmy

was off. No rifle, no equipment. He threw it away as superfluous and ran—ran for dear life—splashing, falling and tumbling through the rotten mud. It held him back and he cursed it; he struggled for breath, but pushed ahead. He was knocked over by the concussion of an exploding shell. Half crazy, he picked himself up and staggered on his way, "Battalion Headquarters" burning into his brain. He had to get there, and get there he did, but he was a maniac at the last.

To-day Jimmy is still in hospital, the quietest, mildest-mannered person you would care to meet, almost feminine in his mildness. He will ask you if you want to see "Battalion Headquarters." That is all he knows. There is hope, though, that some day he will return to his old natural self. At the present, he is trying to remember where he was when he left for "Battalion Headquarters" so he can go back and report to his officer.

Then there was cheery little Tommy, my pal for a long time, but he went the way of the rest. We were in a quiet sector of the line in what is known as "peacetime trenches." Tommy was on sentry go. It was a nice, warm day, and we were talking of the good and hard times we had seen and of those who had gone, either "West" or to Blighty. Then, as usual, the old topic came up; what would we do after the war?

"Well, you can say all you like about your rovin' dispositions and never settlin' down," said Tommy, "but here's one guy with his belly full of rovin'. The next war sees me at the station waving handkerchiefs and hurraying when the boys go away," and he got up to the firing platform to look through the periscope. Finished, he turned around and said: "When this is over, all I want is peace and quiet on a few acres of land so I can grow——"

We never found out what Tommy wanted to grow. We had been sitting with

our backs to him when he tumbled into the trench, a hole through the back of his head. He had forgotten to step down from the firing platform, dreaming his dream, and he had got his wish—"peace and quiet."

So they go, one by one, but always some one must pay the price, and that daily, so that those who come after, whether they be of our own blood, may live in a world where such things as war may never occur again.

Here at home, safe for awhile, among my old friends, I sometimes dream. Sitting by myself in the subway or on a train, I let my mind run riot among the many things I have seen.

I see a civilian hanging to a strap in a subway car, one of our assimilated citizens, and as I look at him something in the way of a vision comes to me. I see his clothes change to khaki and I see him six months later in a trench, on duty, hungry perhaps, but he is there in France, leaning against the wall of the trench as nonchalantly as he is now swinging on the strap in the subway.

I can see troops, endless lines of khaki troops, moving along one of the usual tree-lined, cobbled roads of the French countryside. Ahead of them is a crackling mass of flame, a cloud of smoke hanging over it all. They march toward it. They march through it. The flames die away. Night comes, and off that hill come back some of those who marched into the flame, crippled and tired and longing for rest. On the hill itself are those who won't come back; those who have paid the price, lying in queer positions, some on their hands and knees like a Mohammedan in prayer; others like a Mohammedan who is tired of prayer and has rolled on his back; still others who have lain down as though to rest.

It is for those who have lain down that we must go on and on.

Over the hill and going down the other side are those who have gone through the flame unscathed, happy and pride filled in a job well done.

I can remember many things of my years

at the front. Some I like to recall. Some of my memories are happy ones. Some bring a chuckle even now. Others are sad; grewsome. But through them all shines one; the memory of a mother's letters to her son; nothing in them of worry, nothing of the troubles at home, nothing but love and pride and encouragement, and the hope that soon we would be with each other again.

THE END.

A Crusader of France

Letters of Captain Ferdinand Belmont
(*Killed in action, 1915*)

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